

**FILM
THREAT**

JOHN WOO: A BULLET BETWEEN YOUR EYES!

VIDEO GUIDE

ISSUE 6

\$3.95 U.S. \$4.95 CANADA 3.00 U.K. \$3.95

FX SPECIAL

**THE
SECRETS
BEHIND**

KUNG FU RASCALS

**HOW FILMMAKER STEVE WANG
TWISTED A SHOESTRING BUDGET
INTO AN EPIC ADVENTURE**



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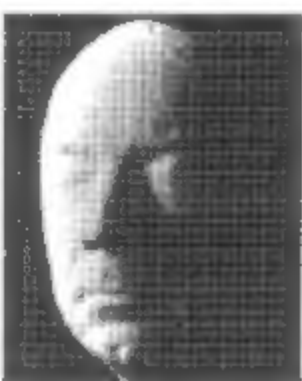
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FILM THREAT™ VIDEO GUIDE

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COVER

KUNG FU RASCALS director STEVE WANG
sets up his next shot.

PHOTO: D.E. WILLIAMS

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SUPER SPECIAL FX ISSUE

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MY name is **SKI-MASK** and I hosts ^{the} **SiCKeST** SHOW on kable Tee-Vee! I **FORCIBLY** invite yous **2** SEE **WHY!!**

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TO FUCK OR NOT TO FUCK?

DAVE,

HOW COME YOU CAN SAY "FUCK"
IN YOUR MAGAZINE BUT GORE
CAN'T IN HIS?
JUST CURIOUS.

JAY

Jay,

In his quest to look subversion into the mainstream, Chris Gore has to follow certain rules laid down by his publisher. However, while "FUCK" is indeed a uniquely versatile word, its absence from Gore's print vocabulary in no way affects his ability to communicate. (See FT #5, p. 41 for the mag's first "FUCK.") Fortunately, FTVG's publisher puts no similar restraints on me, mostly due to the fact that I don't have to worry about offending the fucking assholes at Farmer Jack's.

PORN, ITALIAN STYLE

FILM THREAT VIDEO
P.O. BOX 3170
L.A., CA 90073-3170

Oh David,

I just discovered your two magazines and all I can say is BLESS YOU PEOPLE!!! My shitty comic retailers have a horrible way of overlooking the best things on the market. Anyway, you do an excellent job of making foreign horror available to readers. So, I thought you might be able to help me with another of my twisted interests. I have tried and failed to obtain some foreign erotica (aka: PORN), specifically Italian, I was looking for an actress named Moanna Possi. She is an Italian porn star running for parliament (like her counter part chichalina). Could you help me find a distributor in the states? Adult mags only advertise material made in the U.S., What to do? Also do you know about other foreign markets (Japan, Brazil, etc.)

Choking on the Bible Belt,

Geo
Geo H.

Geo,

Fortunately, I have a girlfriend. If anyone can help this poor slob, send info to FTVG in a plain brown wrapper. (Why do people think I would know about this shit?)

BECOMING THE SOLUTION

R.R. #2
Aylmer, Ontario
Canada N5H 2R2

Hey Chris:

You recently printed scathing attacks on Mondo Video and Chas. Balun for their apparent copying and selling of films without reimbursing the filmmakers. Fine. If you say don't buy from them, I won't. So now what? In order for your criticism to be valid, you MUST be part of the solution to this problem. There is no question that the films offered by both Mondo and Balun are extraordinary in their power and content, and if Film Threat does not provide its readers with an alternative source, in our desperation to get these movies, we will be forced to go to these individuals which may result in the filmmakers losing out.

I strongly believe Film Threat and its staff can come through for us and I look forward to your assistance.

Sincerely,

Michael Manchester

Michael,

You're right. Next issue will attack this question of alternative sources in our cover story, "BANNED FILMS: Where To Find Them on Video." The article was to run this issue, but last minute changes pushed it back—insuring that the information will be the most complete and up-to-date as possible.



Faithful reader Robert O'Brien with a fresh kill. Veal, yummy!

RESPONSE TO BALUN'S BROADSIDE

Dear Pathetic Butt-fucking Wanna-be's,

I recently started carrying *Film Threat Video Guide* in my store in Seattle. When issues 4 and 5 arrived I was shocked by your articles regarding Chas Balun bootlegging tapes. I worked with Chas on *Deep Red* #7 doing design and typesetting while working for FantaCo Enterprises. I also co-edited the *FantaCo Horror Yearbook* which had an anti censorship article and oil painted cover by Chas. He was a pleasure to work with and both projects were a lot of fun.

I was aware of his video service but never gave it too much thought. I'm surprised that a talented, anti-Hollywood columnist like Chas would stoop so low as to dub off copies of an already available title. Although Phantasm has had the opportunity to sell boots, we only sell legitimate videos in our store and through our mail order.

As for FantaCo being 100% anti Film Threat, that was never the case during my 2+ years. In fact, it sold well in the store. Maybe their position has changed since I left last year. After all, *Deep Red* and Chas meant a lot to their sales and it is in their best interest to protect and defend him along with their own bottom line.

And what is this quasi-porn bullshit he accuses you of anyway? Are cannibalism and snuff films somehow on a higher social plane than sex? And speaking of sex, Chas doesn't seem to have any problem selling *Nekromantik*. I guess there's nothing like a little good, clean, all American corpse fucking to brighten up your day.

sincerely,



Eric Hausmann

Phantasm 4306 SW Alaska Street Seattle, Washington 98116

Eric,

Thanks for the support. I'm sure you'd be happy to send a list of your legally available titles to anyone who asked for one, right?

MASTER OF THE OBVIOUS

**DEAR DAVID,
STEVE PUCHALSKI IS A
FILM THREAT CUSTOMER,
BUT HE'S ALSO A SLIMEBAG
BOOTLEGGER - I DARE
YOU TO PRINT THIS!
GENRICO HOBOKEN, NJ**

Gerald,

Not much of a dare. Steve freely admits that his New York-based 'zine, *The Gore Gazette*, has remained "solvent" via bootlegging.



PHOTO: An annoyed Balun offered us some constructive criticism (and several chances to step out into the parking lot) at the recent Fangoria Weekend of Horrors in Los Angeles. (Thanks for the tickets Tony!)

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THIS ...

Dave,

I have gotten to know you and Gore fairly well (better than I would ever admit publicly) and I tend to agree with everything negative that your detractors say about you. When Chas Balun called you guys "pathetic, butt-fucking wanna-be's", "scum", "dickheads", "quasi-pornographers" and purveyors of "half-truths", "innuendos", "out right lies" and "bullshit", I thought "Hmmm... Yeah....I can't really argue with that." But when he called you "snitches", in my opinion, he went too far.



Vic Stanley
Lafayette, IN

RANKLED BY ZEDD

David/FTVG,

'Nother good ish, too, but um should've canned the Zedd article, as I would have rather seen an ad or something in some other bad movie maker, rather than another piece wasted on him. Find someone new to pick on, he's too pathetic. Chas Balun is a real dick too, can't wait to see the 'cart' article 'quasi-porn'?! Gimme a break. Like porn is so much ~~worse~~ than Nekro/Cambel/Slaughter shit he likes/praises. I'd rather watch some hot sex tape than a bad gore flick. And talk about missing the point...

But the New York/Torn/Lundt articles were good, and the reviews were great, as always...

Keep up the Good Work. TAKE CARE.



Sam,

That Zedd piece in last issue was a paid ad. Do you think we'd actually do a story on Nick Zedd? Okay, we did, but it was a purging experience... like taking a five pound dump. And now that it's done, we won't have to do it again for another couple of years.



IS THAT YOU?

Dear Dave M. and Chris G.

Just wanted to send you a few of my thoughts. Not that you'll care, but then that's why FTVG is now what it is: BORING. All of your bombastic badinage means very little....too bad because for the first few issues you really did break some new ground.

As one who works in the fanmag industry, I could give you tips on what you're doing wrong, but why should I? Help you? I don't think so. Had the luxury of actually sitting behind you both a few months ago at a movie in L.A. If I only had a recording of the comments and know it all attitude you spew forth, I could eliminate half your readership. But then again, why bother. You'll manage to wreck your efforts all by yourselves.

As a horror fan, I will continue to buy good quality bootlegs from whoever I can, as well as trade. Nothing either of you two pompous windbags say (especially Gore) will dissuade me.

Naturally I won't sign my name since you might know me. But we'll meet again, and when we do the blood will flow. Say goodnight, bozos.

You Shit-Sucking Coward,

Jealous? Sounds like it to me. Of course your letter also sounds like the words of someone who has tried and failed to start their own magazine—so perhaps I do know who you are. And frankly, the attitude we spew is what actually attracts our readership.

HE'S RIPPING YOU OFF, TOO???

Thanks for continuing the "BALUN-BASHING". He deserve: All the shit he's been getting! I just obtained a list of the bootlegs he's selling, and he's advertising movies he obviously knows nothing about. He's selling a film called "RIGHTING WRONGS" AS A JACKIE Chan movie, when it has nothing to do with the "Chanmeister" at all! Stupid Motherfucker! He's also selling "Bullet in the Head", which is a title we've been stocking on laserdisc. I've had people tell me they've obtained bootlegs from him AND now they don't want to buy the disc. He's taking away sales from our store!

Keep up the good work,
Don May

Don,

The sad fact is that bootleggers provide a low-level marketplace for many fans who are too cheap or broke to buy the real thing. But in many cases, potential buyers with the cash don't even know where to buy or order the titles they want. Maybe your store should advertise in an appropriate venue. (A rate card is on the way.) Knowing that they can buy from a reputable dealer may convince some fans to save up for that rare disc or tape as opposed to dealing with crooks for less money (and far less quality).

FROM ONE "TOTAL FUCKING ASSHOLE" TO ANOTHER

SPENCER HICKMAN,
50 WILKINSON RD,
GREAT BARR, BIRMINGHAM, B42 2LD,
ENGLAND.


FILM THREAT,

T. F. A. → TOTAL FUCKING ASSHOLES

THAT'S THE FIRST THING THAT ENTERED MY MIND WHEN I READ YOUR POINTLESS, STUPID BUT MOST OF ALL PATHETIC HATCHET JOB ON CHAS. BALUN. YOU FUCKIN' DICKS, HOW YOU CAN LUMP CHAS. IN WITH CUN MAN DON FARMER IS WAY BEYOND ME..

CHAS. DOESN'T MAKE A LIVING OUT OF IT, AND ANYWAY CHAS "DISCOVERED" JORG & MANFRED IN THE U.S. RAVING ABOUT THEM YEARS BEFORE YOU LIVED UP AND STUCK THEM ON THE COVER.

IF IT WASN'T FOR BOOTLESSING, JORG'S WORK STILL WOULDN'T BE SEEN OUTSIDE OF HIS BEDROOM AND THEY CERTAINLY WOULDN'T HAVE THE CULT FOLLOWINGS THAT THEY DO NOW—HEY I'M NOT CONDONING BOOTLESSING—BUT IF IT WASN'T FOR ILLEGAL COPIES MYSELF AND FEW U.K. ZINE EDITORS WOULD HAVE FUCK-ALL TO WRITE ABOUT.

SEE YA


Spencer,

Like yourself and other "zine editors," we initially saw Buttger's films via shitty bootlegs, but that's where our similarities end. We didn't sit on our asses and whine like so many "fans" about there being no distributor for such films. Instead, we took the initiative to contact the responsible party, hammer out an agreement and get the films widely and legally released here. We became the distributor. How? Through endless negotiations and late nights of drudgery. Why? Because unlike yourself and the others, we give enough of a shit about films and filmmakers to put forth the effort. So far as Balun's "discovery" of Jorg & Manfred is concerned, what good did it do them since he simply decided to profit from their work? The limited fanzine exposure he gave them probably had no bearing on their continued filmmaking—but I'd guess that the thousands of dollars in royalties we've sent them will. Fact facts. Cult followings and glowing praise won't help anyone get another film made. Money will. And so far as Balun "not making a living out of it" is concerned, that's just because he's a poor businessman.

SHUT UP & JUST LOOK AT THE PICTURES



FTV6 -

I found your review on the Noir Leather tape "Skin and Bones Bull" (FTV6 #5) confusing - was it a reprint or what? And could you print another photo? Sadly, I'm yet another sad case incapable of getting a date. (Ya mother-fuckers!)

Jeremy Roos

Jeremy,

As explained, the review was in fact a reprint. Do us all a favor and read c-a-r-e-f-u-l-l-y. (That way you can catch all the typos.) Another photo? Fuck yeah!

SNUFF STUFF

To Film Threat Video Guide: I have been hearing a lot of talk about the "Snuff" industry and they've all said that it does not exist. I was wondering if you yourself or anyone that you know know if it does exist and where I might could locate some of these "snuff" films.

Thanks Randy K.

Randy,

Are you kidding or just stupid? While "snuff" films may exist in the backwaters of South America and Asia (or fucked up minds like your own), no evidence of them has ever been found in the States, despite intensive FBI and Justice Dept. investigations.



PHOTO: Slash, overpaid guitarist and idol to millions of braindead MTV morons. At least he has taste in T-shirts.

UNSCHOOLED LOU

Hi!

The FT Video Guide is good. I especially liked the tone of "Busted" and the informational content of "Seeing Red" (both in issue #4). But the editorial "Where Are They" was a bit disagreeable to me. What the fuck is a "serious" film maker, and how did you get the authority to judge one? Film School? Seriously, I enjoy reading about all of the hokey, stupid, poorly made pieces 'o shit that you review, which is one of the reasons I periodically buy your mag. I had never had an interest in seeing New York "art" films before reading FT, but because of you I went out and rented some. I personally think that lot's of the stuff done by Kern and that crowd is boring, stupid and poorly made, but you guys obviously find merit in it. So who's right? (I guess because I don't have a film degree my opinion doesn't count).

John A. Marmysz

John A. Marmysz

John,

You don't need special training to know what you like and everyone is entitled to their opinion, but after watching hundreds of films made by aspiring directors, I have a fairly informed take on what could or should be taken seriously. Who's right? Everybody who agrees with me. Who's wrong? Everybody who doesn't. Your opinion only matters as much as you think it does.



BUYING AN AUDIENCE

(or The Big Film Festival Lie)

SPAWNED IN THE DARK AGES before video, film festivals used to be the only forum for potential distributors to see new "product." But now, with the inexpensive ease of video, many new "films" don't even *exist* on film. So what's the reason for entering an archaic contest when a tape sent to the right people (without the entrance fee) could serve the same purpose?

What does the average filmmaker who plunks down his \$50–500 "entrance fee" usually get out of this circus? Nothing. Sure, you hear stories about *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* being revived by screenings at Telluride and the success *sex, lies and videotape* garnered at Sundance—but face facts, those films were going to make it anyways; they were made by people who were already on the inside.

The vast majority of people who enter festivals—like you and me who have to avoid their landlord in order to juggle the costs of raw stock and equipment rental—get nothing in return but a cancelled check. So why should you pay to support that self-congratulatory nonsense?

Sure, the Nissan Awards offer a "brand new car" and the Student Academy Awards basically promise a Hollywood agent—but your chances of winning, unless you're an NEA-sponsored, politically correct feminist who made a film about a dying old woman who builds a beautiful relationship with her granddaughter just before kicking the bucket, are slightly

below Z-E-R-O.

Like most of you, I will never make that film because I couldn't hold my nose long enough to do so. I couldn't live that lie. And considering the costs involved with repeatedly entering festivals—I doubt I could ever even afford it if I wanted to try.

So, how should filmmakers find their audience? Self-distribution.

If people want a film, they will buy it. All you have to do is offer it to them. If filmmakers took the same \$50–500 bucks they were saving to enter festivals and put it into advertising, they would not only get the exposure they want, but the possibility of **MAKING THEIR MONEY BACK**. And considering the effort involved, self-distribution is more profitable than entering festivals in an effort to *find a distributor*. Granted, they are similar activities with the same hoped-for outcome, but one requires a middle-man who must be convinced of the film's worth and the other doesn't. One takes the control out of your hands, the other doesn't. One takes a big percentage of the profits and the other doesn't.

There *are* costs involved, but there were also costs involved in making the film in the first place. Would you argue that spending \$50–500 bucks on advertising that could result in immediate returns was too high? After you'd blown \$10,000 on making the thing!? If so, you're obviously not interested in making a second pic-

ture—to continue making films you have to be profitable enough to finance the next.

I think you get the idea.

Since FTVG began, we've distributed over 60 films. And while some have sold better than others, it was all done without winning festivals or help from established distribution companies. We offered the films we liked and individuals, video stores and even schools, bought them. (Believe it—there's a copy of *Hardcore Kern Vol 1* at Carnegie Mellon University.) So forget paying for an audience—if it's good, people will pay to see your film.

Then again, if you're so desperate to get your movie seen, just make a check for \$30 out to me personally and I'll promise to eventually get around to it.

Laying in wait,

David E. Williams
Editor-in-Chief

THIS IS OBVIOUSLY NOT THE "BANNED FILMS" ISSUE WE PROMISED

I apologize to anyone who feels deceived, but I felt the cover story needed more work—the gory details of which I won't go into at this time.

SHAWNA

DIARY OF A
ROCK-N-ROLL
PORN QUEEN

Her Mother and Father
were brother and sister.
Now she's an inbred
sex freak in this
perverted behind
the scenes look at
Shawna as she
rises from street
trash to sex queen
stardom!

Why does she do it?
Hear her story!

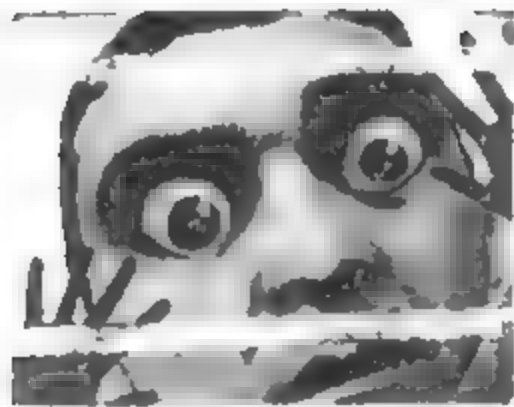
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WARNING: Contains scenes of violence, strong language,
adult situations and nudity. Must be at least 18 years old to purchase this tape.
Please send a statement of age with the order.



SCAN

Reviews by Gabriel Alvarez, Dennis Barth Jr., Merle Bertrand, Tom Brown, Michael Ling, Dave Parker, Graham Rae, Paul T. Riddell, Todd Spencer, Aaron J. Vanek, Phillip Vigeant and David E. Williams.
For more info about these and other films, consult our classified section and other ads.

8

THE COMB

15min/35mm
Zeitgeist Films

Although their work has earned them a devoted following (and become a staple of MTV's regularly aired "video collection"), the American-born, London-based Brothers Quay have maintained both their Kubrickesque reclusivity and disturbingly unique abstract vision. In the animators' most recent slice of surrealism, *The Comb*, a doll-like explorer penetrates the progressing states of a dreamer's subconscious. There, the chipped, porcelain-faced character discovers gloriously sweeping vistas and shadow-wracked catacombs within her imagination as it literally climbs ladders through her mind. Hypnotically liquid, the flowing images recall Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* in their seamlessness, but never overwhelm the audience—allowing one to savor each color, sound and texture. The fluid three-dimensional animation—unrestricted to traditional character workings—adds dizzying camera movement and unsettling deconstructions to combine with the equally unnerving soundtrack



The doll-like dream explorer from The Brothers Quay's latest, *The Comb*.

of alternately shrieking and rumbling audio. For those wondering what this has to do with the titular hairdressing implement, don't bother—you'll never get it.

—D.E.W.

8

WAR IS MENSTRUAL ENVY

77min/16mm
Penetration Films

Zedd's self-proclaimed masterpiece *War Is Menstrual Envy* is his most expansive and elaborate effort in many years, composed as a trilogy of

intertwining vignettes combined to make a serious anti-war, anti-religion statement. After a nuclear holocaust 100 years in the future, the surviving 10% of the population establishes psychic contact with dolphins, and, in the next logical step, destroy Christianity and Islam. However, since there is no dialogue, this premise won't be readily apparent to the casual viewer.

The prologue depicts two shrouded forms in their death throes, desperately grasping at each other in a vain attempt to retain some shred of dignity and humanity—a humani-

ty which has been destroyed on their behalf by the monolithic war machine. This initial scene is the most compelling and effective imagery of the film. That which follows succeeds or fails in varying degrees.

In an eye-catching portion of the opening title credits, the impeccably shaven Steven Oddo, an emaciated and scarified cross between Adam Sandler of *SNL* and Mick Jones, formerly of the Clash, carves the word "WAR" on his chest with a razor blade. Then, the even more impeccably shaven Kembra Pfahler appears in a lengthy sequence of crudely



WAR IS MENSTRUAL ENVY:
Nick Zedd strikes back
with his first film in
years—and the first to
live up to the hype.

blue screened underwater effects; culminating in some aquatic erotica with a pair of amorous cephalopods of intermediate species. These scenes seemingly represent interbreeding, mutation and continued evolution of humankind into a hybrid form of marine life.

Subsequent scenes reveal the personal consequences of nuclear aggression in grim detail. Zedd himself makes a brief appearance as some sort of Mohawked mutant. In the finale, a horribly scarred survivor is nurtured first by the now completely transformed, blue-skinned Dolphin

Woman attired in a nun's habit, then by the charmingly spacy Annie Sprinkle in her "Any the Goddess" incarnation. Mankind is left the victim of its own "Transgressions" while Womanhood transcends the violence to provide healing, wisdom and the prospect of a peaceful existence in a decimated, post nuclear climate.

The film incorporates stylistic elements of Zedd's previous works which further contribute to the apocalyptic atmosphere of the more effective scenes. Supported by

his largest cast and crew in years and a powerful soundtrack, Zedd's bleak visions of a futuristic culture are at once vivid, thought provoking and perplexing. Although a 60 minute version of *W.I.M.E.* would have been more concise, this is the closest that Zedd has ever come to successfully transposing the epic he envisions in his mind's eye to the screen. It is to his credit that he employed a non-narrative technique so effectively. Naturally, his detractors will hate it.

—V.S.

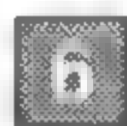
out of me or do it in a way only a great imagination could devise. Choking someone for five seconds just doesn't do it. Similar problems hamper *The Roommate*. If someone is supposed to be obnoxious there needs to be bizarre and insensitive behaviors—a girl who spends a little too much time at the beach and in the bathroom does not qualify.

These are great films as school projects or festival entries, but as commercial films they lack the originality and imagination for success.

—P.V.

EXPLAINING OUR RATINGS:

- 10** Perfect! A must for any collection and worth twice the price!
- 9** Excellent. Definitely worth buying.
- 8** Great. We're jealous and wish we'd thought of it.
- 7** Very Good. Would get the filmmaker an "A" at U.C.L.A.
- 6** Good. But not "very good." Wait until you have extra cash.
- 5** A few good scenes, but only at the 7-Eleven security-cam level.
- 4** Dull. But interesting at scan speed.
- 3** Trance-inducing. Not interesting, even at scan speed.
- 2** Bad. You have a new blank tape.
- 1** Sucks! No explanation necessary.



QUARTER AFTER MIDNIGHT & THE ROOMMATE

42min/Super 8
Toppe-Hat Prods.

Both of these shorts would earn A's in film school—so it's not surprising that they are also both Gold Medal Winners at the Houston International Film Festival. There is great sound, perfect continuity, very good storytelling and—although a bit underexposed—very good photographic skills. *QAM* follows the anxiety of a man who is dreaming he is a serial killer, the catch being that these people are actually being killed. *The Roommate* tracks a young couple invaded by an obnoxious friend who comes to visit for a few days and forgets to leave. The premise of these films and just about everything else is good, but, unfortunately, they don't really go anywhere. There is nothing original about these films; nothing stupendous happens. The killings in *Midnight* are not frightening and the anger is controlled. If you're going to kill someone on film either scare the shit



QUEST FOR THE MONKEY GOD

74 min/ Super 8
Village Films, Ltd.

Quest For The Monkey God is a brave attempt at a no-budget (\$14,000) shot-on-film adventure comedy. Carl Miller and Beulah Lumpkin work for the weasely Lupe Stromberger at the Burrito Barn. But Carl is also a writer. In his latest novel, he's portrayed himself as a gun-wielding mercenary, Beulah becomes the ravishing Kit Kane and together they're trying to keep the Patched Monkey of Arquette out of the evil clutches of the mad Oriental monk Lame Duck, Lupe's alter ego.

The film suffers a bit from its budgetary constraints. The sound mix is a bit choppy and uneven and since the production team doubled as actors, (in true guerrilla filmmaking form), their double duty forced a somewhat conservative style of cinematography. (i.e., the camera doesn't move much.) There's also a few too-talky plot exposition scenes, but they are counterbalanced

by a number of truly funny bits. Hey, for all its faults, this is a movie, not some schlocky, shot-on-video tripe. Given its budgetary limitations, this bizarre cross between *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *The Wizard of Oz* is a competent, solid film.

—R.Y.

REVIEW SPOTLIGHT



RED: Lawrence Tierney brings the infamous booze jockey to life—Ya bastard!

2 ATTACK OF THE HIDEOPOIDI

83min/Video
Demolition Films

Look, I understand the constraints of no-budget filmmaking. I've done it myself and I know of others who've made no-budget films. It can be done and done well, or at least interestingly. Not so is this video. How many times do we have to see retarded rednecks on killing sprees? How many times do we have to watch stupidly cheesy gross-out effects? Okay, okay, here's the synopsis from the box: "Confined to his bed in an asylum for the criminally insane, Billy Boy Shrank is no ordinary man: He's a decomposing, moronic, telepathic cannibal. He's also a victim of unrequited love for Reena, an angry, young punk leader of a dedicated but fledgling all girl rock group."

Trust me, this film's not that good. Filled with anciently un-hip and commonplace video effects and with not one iota of decent storytelling, this is nauseously bad. It's time people stopped blaming lack of budget for poor product.

—M.B.

9

RED
34min/35mm stills & Super 8
FILM THREAT VIDEO

Having never heard the infamous "Red" audio recording I went into this one rather blind. But it didn't take long for my eyes to open really wide, as for the next thirty or so minutes I "took in" an outrageous little movie. If I wasn't laughing my ass off, I was watching in joyous dread as to where this twisted film was heading. Lawrence Tierney is an absolute hoot as a frenzied beefy bartender who must put up with an obnoxious prank-caller whose gab-garbage ranges from the hopelessly silly "Is Al Coholic there?" to the more pimple-faced juvenile "Is Mike Hunt there?" As the calls continue to come in at a hellacious pace, ol' Red gets more and more steamed, finally letting off a stream of obscenities of his own.

In *Taxi Driver* fashion, it's only a matter of time before the viewer knows that all bloody hell is going to break loose, either in fantasy or

reality, and in this case, both. Tierney's performance is a solid one built on the premise that everyone reaches the end of their rope sometime, but who knows to what extent that individual will go in letting the air out of their emotional tire, so-to-speak. How Red handles this "asshole of phonedom" is surprising, unsettling, and ultimately quite sad. In a mere half-hour it isn't hard to see some insight into Red's character, that of a basically likeable guy, finding himself dealing with his own insecurities, his manhood up against this persistent prankster.

Now don't get me wrong: Chris Gore has not fashioned a Truffaut piece, (I don't think he could live with himself if that were the case!) but rather a somewhat humanistic black comedy laced with spontaneous bouts of shocking gore. Intelligently written, nicely photographed, and well acted, *Red* is a most unusual and somewhat unnerving experience, highly recommended for connoisseurs of dark diversions.

—T.B.



Hollow World: What if Jeffrey Dahmer had had a video camera (and some better luck)?

7

HOLLOW WORLD

30min/Video
One Blood Prods.

If Jeffrey Dahmer had a camcorder, the resulting footage

could have very well resembled this stark offering from New York videomaker Eleanor Goldsmith. The tale of a lonely dysfunctional urbanite, this odious tour chronicles his sociopathic quest for friendship as he lures

home, courts and kills his victims. Most horribly, this meek monster is seen not as hateful of his prey, but loving and caring. He dutifully bathes and dresses them like a mother would her children—ensuring a comfortable transition into their new home. He throws parties for them, posing the bodies about a table replete with food, booze and paper hats. And he finally dismembers them for disposal. Goldsmith coldly documents this bizarre ritual in graphic, lingering detail, but does so without sensationalizing or glamorizing the morbidity. Paul M. Albe is insidiously "normal" as the

tortured killer, bypassing the drooling stereotype as successfully as Michael Rooker did in *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (but with a sense of vulnerability that character lacked)—making him as much a victim as his prey.

—D.E.W.

8

SESSION: IMPOSSIBLE

85min/Super 8 & 16mm
Neu Horizons

A take-off on the classic television show, filmmaker Jeff Neu's humorous documentary is a breathtaking ode to that sport of Hawaiian kings: surfing. Constructed from some of the most wave-in-your-face footage I've ever seen, *Session: Impossible* is an *Endless Summer* for the 90s as neon sun block, neoprimitive tattoos and high-tech surf gear collide with the cresting tides. Roaming the planet in search of the best waves (as well as the best babes) Neu cuts back and forth across Panama, Mexico and Hawaii, featuring such noted surfers as "Johnny Boy" Gomes, Derek Ho and Michael "Munga" Barry as they tempt the gods. By utilizing multiple in-water cameras, Neu fully captures the danger, excitement and grace inherent to the sport—with the boards sometimes missing the lenses by just inches for that added thrill.

—D.E.W.

9

THE ALBATROSS

60min/Video
Ennui Prods

Carter Drummond is the albatross around Norman Bastilles' neck in this near-miss from John Hays. Good

Samaritan, Norman saves Carter's life and gets him a job, only to have his own life collapse in a pile of rubble all around him just as a result of Carter's presence. It seems that Carter is one of those people whose misfortune follows relentlessly, afflicting everyone he meets. This is not a totally unique idea for a film, which is one major problem of this movie. Also a problem is the pacing which drags the tape on and on. Instead of each catastrophe building upon itself, we're left trying to keep track of all that's happened because the film gives us time to try to think about everything. Still *The Albatross* has its moments. It's well shot, the sound and direction are competent and the performances of Steven Russles as Norman and Robert Nottingham as Carter are very solid. It just could've used a little punch.

—M.B.

10

THE INCREDIBLE EAGLE EYE FILM FESTIVAL

80min/Super 8 & Video
Miskotonic Films

A "compilation of shorts produced during the director's tenure as his high school's film club president," says the description submitted with this tape. I think "high school" is all we need to know about this collection of films and videos. While these projects may have been interesting and amusing to those in that film club who knew everyone involved, they don't make the transition to someone on the outside. A combination of video sketches as well as bits using found footage, this tape is victim-

Crazed farmers dancing to the blues;
Texas-style Franz Kafka;
Frankenstein lives —

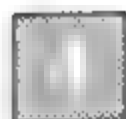


**FILMS OF
ROSS WELLS**

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6101 River Road #27
Columbus, GA. 31904
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ized by the amateurish quality you might expect from a group of high school kids with a video camera. Still, there are flashes of inspiration here and given time, director Alvin Ecarma may be capable of some engaging stuff—just not yet.

—M.B.



SLEEP CHAMBER

60 long minutes/Video
Inner-X-Musick

Sleep Chamber is a band along the lines of old Psychic Youth before they went disco. The difference is that Sleep Chamber is far less talented and every single song is about sex.

Imagine if you will, nine videos consisting of the same music and the same images. Okay, the music and the women vary subtly for video to video, but let's face it, watching different girls touch themselves to a repetitious soundtrack isn't the most interesting or erotic thing you can do with a VCR.

However, I have to give a bonus point for the honesty these guys exhibited when naming their band. I was snoring in no time.

—D.P.



SMALL GAUGE SHOTGUN

84 min/Super 8
FILM THREAT VIDEO

An interesting compilation of shorts by two different directors with two very different styles, *Shotgun* is a deal.

Danny Plotnick's shorts are very fast-paced and—for the most part—very funny. My favorite is *Dumbass From*

Dundas, which is about two dickheads who get tossed out of two separate cars in the middle of the desert. A very funny idea that could easily be expanded into a feature.

Jim Sikora's stuff, on the other hand, has more of a film school look: lots of weird images set to cool music. There is, however, a great adaptation of a Bukowski story called *Love, After the Walls Close In*.



Sikora's Charles Bukowski adaptation, LOVE AFTER THE WALLS CLOSE IN.

It's definitely a great idea to combine these two guy's films on one reel. You get your money's worth. And since the only movies that get made now are sequels and TV shows, this may be the only chance you get to see these directors' work. It's hard to imagine that these guys' phones are jammed with Hollywood calls for three-picture deals at Touchstone.

—D.P.



THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SPECIAL MAKE-UP EFFECTS

60min/Video

Having spent a portion of my misspent youth attempt-



Plotnick's STEEL BELTED ROMEOS.

ing to emulate the make-up effects of such greats as Savini and Rambaldi (and why the hell do all the good ones have Italian names?), I chortled with morbid glee at the opportunity to review Zeke Gonzalez' *The Beginners Guide To Special Make-Up Effects*. The title was a bit misleading though, as this tape is not an overview of beginning make-up techniques but a "How-To" covering burn, bullet hole, swollen eye, and (my favorite) severed hand effects. Although the video documentation of these methods was exhaustive to a fault, I can't recommend this tape to total beginners due to the sparseness of the narration and the complexity of some of the methods. The video was evenly lit—if a bit dim—suffered from a lack of insert shots and judicious editing. Did we really need to see five minutes of Zeke daubing gelatin on a friend's face? Regardless of these faults, it was kinda cool watching these effects take shape under the hands of a skilled artist. The material lists given before each project were a well-considered inclusion as well, despite the occasional misspelling. Zeke's by-the-hand approach might be just the thing for some novices look-

ing to learn a more advanced effect, making this tape fairly useful to the many gore-monsters out there with aspirations of being the latest low-budget answer to Rick Baker.

—T.S.



KUNG FU RASCALS

100min/Super 8
FILM THREAT VIDEO

Let's face it; most films by special effects wizards are boring. Whether it be to show off some new work (Mike Jitlov's *The Wizard of Speed and Time* or Empire Pictures' godawful *The Dungeon Master* are two examples) or just get a chance to actually direct, most of these guys forget about one thing: The plot. Without a credible story, the audience sits in agony in the low points between FX shots, and odds are that they won't remember a damn thing besides those shots.

That's why *Kung Fu Rascals* is so damn fun. Director Steve Wang (co-director of *Guyver*) knows his FX stunts, but uses them as backdrop for interesting characters, witty dialogue and a lot of belly laughs. Best of all, not only does he show that good effects don't need to cost millions of



KUNG FU RASCALS: The height of Super 8.

dollars (anybody listening at ILM?), but he manages to prove that well-directed and shot kung fu movies are just as fun as the bad ones.

Kung Fu Rascals follows the exploits of three self-proclaimed martial arts experts as they try to find a grand treasure with the help of a strange stone map. The evil Bamboo Man from Ka Pow wants the map as well, so he sends his henchman, Rasmus, the Mad Monk, to retrieve it by hook or by crook. To this end, the three battle giant frogs, ninjas and a giant stone guardian known as the Nio-

Titan, and generally get the chance to crack as many jokes as possible.

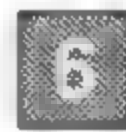
Were this done by just any director with the shoestring budget Wang worked with, this sucker would look

like an outtake from *Star Trek V*. In his hands, though, he makes plastic and plaster come alive. Just the sequence with the Nio-Titan rivals the Talos beach sequence in *Jason and the Argonauts*, only using forced perspective shots instead of stop-action animation. At the same time, while everyone oohs and aahs over the excellent special effects, they're laughing their fool heads off over the seriously demented jokes throughout this. Just the constant bits concerning Bruce Lee make this worthwhile, and the punny names are actually

amusing rather than stupid. Of course, what good is a kung fu movie without good chop socky? That's one question we don't have to answer, because this sucker is chock full of some of the best fighting in many a moon. In true kung fu fashion, the fights go on and on and on forever. Man, if only someone would show Steven Seagal some of this stuff.

The end credits promise more adventures for our trio, and I hope they come soon. When the best the theatres offer is *Alien³* and *Patriot Games*, we need more twisted fun on the VCR to remember what good film is while we're waiting for the release of *Guyver*.

—P.T.R.



I WAS A TEENAGE MUMMY

70min/B&W/16mm
Ghost Limb Films

At first look, *I Was a Teenage Mummy* appears to be a classic '50s horror flick.

Bad acting, bad writing, middle aged actors playing teenagers, bad directing—well you get the picture. The thing that separates this film from, let's say, the late Michael Landon's classic *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* is that it's not quite as much fun.

The story involves a foreign exchange student (whose new American friends call Raymond) who happens to wander into the wrong bathroom at the wrong time. There he overhears three greasers led by "Crater" (which I assume isn't because of his smooth complexion) talking about their recent hi-jinx. Crater isn't pleased about Raymond's intrusion and the boys give our friend the old toilet bowl shampoo and rinse. Raymond plans his revenge by kidnapping a straight arrow named Stella. He conjures up the spirit of Isis (because, as we know, anyone from another country has this ability) and turns poor innocent Stella into a **TEENAGE MUMMY!** Lots of good blood and gore

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MOVIE GOERS I HAVE KNOWN

(BY)
J. DEAGNON
ESQ

NOW
PLAYING
PHLEGM
THE MOVIE

COMING
SOON!
I WAS A
TEENAGE
STRANGLER

WITH THE ADVENT OF HOME VIDEO, I'VE AVOIDED A LOT OF THE BULLSHIT THAT ACCOMPANIES A TRIP TO THE LOCAL GRIND HOUSE, BUT, OCCASIONALLY I'LL BE STRUCK WITH —NOSTALGIA— FOR THAT WHOLE "THEATRE" EXPERIENCE, SO, I GUESS I'LL NEVER ESCAPE THE ANNOYING CAGGLE OF HECKLERS AND PINHEADS THAT TURN MY ENJOYMENT OF A PICTURE INTO A LIVING HELL.



HERE'S A
SMALL
EXAMPLE..

① THE "SKEPTIC"

EVERYTHING IN THE MOVIES IS PURE HOKUM TO THESE CHARACTERS. THEY CAN'T SUSPEND THEIR DISBELIEF EVEN IN THE MOST REALISTIC FILM.

YEAH RIGHT
YOU CAN'T HEAR
EXPLOSIONS
IN SPACE"

WHO WROTE THIS
SHIT?? THEY
MUST THINK WE
ARE COMPLETE
MORONS!



ACTUALLY, THIS SOUNDS LIKE
MYSELF AND MOST OF MY FRIENDS

② THE "INTERROGATOR"

THIS SPECIMEN HAS SUCH A SHORT ATTENTION SPAN, THAT THEY CAN'T WAIT FOR THE MOST SIMPLISTIC OF PLOTS TO UNRAVEL!

WHY DID HE
DO THAT?

THIS IS
STUPID!



IS HE A
GOOD GUY
OR A
BAD GUY?

DOES
SHE
DIE?

I
CAN'T
GRASP
WHAT'S
GOING
ON.

③ "THE LOUDMOUTH"

USUALLY FOUND IN ACTION AND HORROR FLICKS YELLING OVER EXPLOSIONS OR IN DRAMAS, ACTING AS SELF-APPOINTED COMEDY RELIEF.

YOU JUST BOUGHT
YOURSELF A CAN OF
KICKASS
MOTHERFUCKER!!

SHOOTING
AT THE
VIETCONG
IN
MISSING IN
ACTION II



SHOOTING AT UMA THURMAN
IN "DANGEROUS LIAISONS"

NICE
TITS!
HAW
HAW!!

④ THE "SNOOZER"

ANYTHING MORE COMPLEX THAN "BATMAN" PUTS THIS POOR SLOB IN SLUMBERLAND WITHIN MINUTES



ZZZZZZ

⑤ THE "PSYCHOPATH"

(THIS IS TRUE) IN MY HOMETOWN, THERE WAS THIS SWEATY OVERWEIGHT HALF RETARDED GUY WHO WOULD SIT IN THE BACK ROW AT A SLASHER FLICK AND GIGGLE HYSTERICALLY WHENEVER SOME BIMBO WAS BEING DISMEMBERED

HEE
HEE HEE
HEE
HEE

HOO HEE HEE



⑥ THE "FANBOY"

THESE PARASITES CALL ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER "ARNIE" AND WHISPER REVEALING "BEHIND THE SCENES" GOSSIP AT PAUSES IN THE FILM. THIS DESPERATE WANNABE WILL PROBABLY KISSASS HIS WAY INTO A POSITION AS A "TV MUSIC JOURNALIST" OR A "WRITER" FOR "ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY"

TERMINATOR 2
LOSES ITS
IMPACT ON
THE
SMALL
SCREEN!

DID I
TELL YOU
I
MET
BOB
ZEMECKIS?



ensues from this point which gives the film a needed jolt.

Writer/director Christopher Friere weaves together a pretty entertaining story, but maybe should think of making his own original films instead of basically remaking classic "B" flicks.

—D.B.J.



Hot Love: Early Buttgerelt perversions.

8 & 7

CORPSE FUCKING ART & HOT LOVE

90 min/Super 8 & 16mm
FILM THREAT VIDEO

Well, as documentaries that detail the 'making of' go, *Corpse Fucking Art* is pretty damned good. A self-styled 'shockumentary' on the films of Jorg Buttgerelt, Germany's best young radical sleaze-hound director (the title stems from when a critic told Jorg he had made art with *Nekromantik* and he replied, "Funny, eh! Corpse-fucking art."), *Art* assails us with several of the unforgettable moments from both *Nekromantik* films and Buttgerelt's suicide opus *Der Todesking* (*The Death King*), then

shows us how the FX and intricate camera work were performed. Some choice footage here (as well as another chance for the sleazier of us to ogle the tits of Beatrice M. and Monika M.—they truly are great).

Hot Love, an early Buttgerelt short film, treads along a well-worn and melancholy path, with a few twists to keep things unpredictable. It's a simple yarn: Boy meets girl and falls in love. Boy finds girl screwing a blond stud and is crushed. Boy kills woman in forest in anger, fucks her corpse and kills himself. Nine months later: Girl is pregnant. Girl and stud are watching television when suddenly the child starts to mutate into something horrible, with devastating results.

As I've said, this is one of Buttgerelt's earlier efforts, and as such, lacks the technical sheen of some of his later works. It does, however, have a fine John Boy Walton soundtrack (whose piano concertos are immediately recognizable to the Buttgerelt buff), a great performance from Daktari Lorenz, star of *Nekromantik*, the first instance of necrophilia in Buttgerelt's adipoceric adonis-adoring oeuvre and a great little blow at the end that'll leave you freaked. L'amour, c'est la guerre.

—G.R.



PAINTINGS IN MOTION PROJECT

30min/Super 8
Calliope Maximum Prods.

Performance art-like mood pieces strung together by a curiously engaging soundtrack, this collection of atmo-

spheric scenes isn't so much a film as an essay about its star, a shortly shorn blonde named Quen. With model looks and a thoughtful eye for what makes herself look good, she and her crew have fashioned many remarkable images—though most only muster the substance of a *Vegas* fashion layout. There is something to be said about beauty, but I've never found simple imagery confections to be very satisfying—leaving *Paintings* about as filling as a platter of cotton candy

—D.E.W

3

'CEPT JIM

49min/B&W/Video

A M.E. Collins and
William K. Waters Prod.

Imagine if you will, a world where every day you sit

PAINTINGS IN MOTION: Quen looks great—less filling.

MR. FLATHEAD

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When you see ... **MR. FLATHEAD**

SCANDALINE
PRODUCTIONS

621 Park City Center, Box 53
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Color / 85 min.
Not Rated
Copyright 1992
PhunnyFilms



around smoking pot, drinking beer, masturbating and watching the tube. (God, this sounds eerily familiar). Well, this world becomes all to real in the self-proclaimed epic *'Cept Jim*.

Our story unfolds as Gary and Jim sit around smoking pot, drinking beer, watching the tube. Hey wait a minute, that's all they do for 49 minutes! Oh yeah, they complain a lot, too. I remember Gary gets up to piss once. Wow! That was exciting. Did I mention the conflict of the story? Well that's because there isn't one. In fact, there's no story. Don't get me wrong, Jim does have a certain charm—in a Frank Booth sort of way—and Gary, well he just urinates a lot. One thing did come out

of these 49 minutes of sheer excitement. I realized just how shitty my life could be.

—D.B.J.



THE BEST OF THE FESTS 1991

90min/Color and B&W/Vari-
ous Formats
Picture Start, Inc.

The Best of the Fests is a collection of short films from film festivals all across the globe. Out of the eleven shorts here I only found fault with a couple of them. One, *Harvest Town*, an animated recollection of a musician's youth, was just a little too sappy for my taste, and besides the song wasn't very

good anyways.

The other below par one was *Waiting for the Bridge*. This short deals with an anti-violence message, but it just didn't do it for me. Enough negativity, those two shorts hardly ruin an entertaining video. The two stand-outs on the tape are the first feature, *Six Point Nine*, and *In Transit*.

Six Point Nine deals with the hilarious morning adventures of two very different people who happen to share a wall during a major earthquake. *In Transit* concerns itself with a man waiting for a bus as he is surrounded by his future

ZEDD IS NOT DEAD



PENETRATION FILMS PRESENTS

NICK ZEDD

POLICE STATE
THEY EAT SCUM
THRUST IN ME
WHOREGASM/I SHIT ON GOD
GEEK MAGGOT BINGO
THE CINEMA OF TRANSGRESSION
THE WILD WORLD OF LYDIA LUNCH
WAR IS MENSTRUAL ENVY
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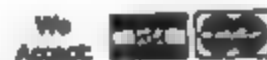
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fellow travelers. Anyone who's ridden a bus knows the psychos that frequent them are very special type of people and director Kevin Bourque has that "specialness" down pat. All of the work here benefits from high production values—something I don't see here very often—and that makes a good reason to check this tape out.

—M.L.



SINCE STONEWALL

80min/Color & B&W/Vari-
ous Formats
Picture Start, Inc.

Here are ten great short films reflecting the feelings, fears, humor, artistry, and changing realities of gay America. I wish I could of wrote this intro, but it's the work of Independent Short Film Showcase who delivers another collection of above-average shorts from the likes of Gus Van Sant and David Weissman.

Gus Van Sant directs an adaptation of William S. Burroughs "Discipline of De." Combining the words of Burroughs and the images of Van Sant, the principle of DE (Do Easy) is explained. DE simply

means doing whatever you do in the easiest most relaxed way you can manage. It runs like a nine minute instructional video for anal retentives. David Weissman contributes two shorts to the compilation. The better of the two, *Song from an Angel*, documents the late Rodney Price, an AIDS victim, giving his final performance of "I've Got Less Time Than You" from the tune of Kurt Weill's "One Life to Live." It proves to be a haunting and thought provoking five minutes.

After viewing *Since Stonewall* I realized that it was one of the best compilation tapes we have received at the GUIDE. Not only because it is entertaining, but because it contains relevant themes and messages which are important to our society.

—D.B.J.



SINCE I DON'T HAVE YOU

80min/Color/Super 8,
Big Dog Prods.

I guess it had to happen. With the success of such innovative directors as David Lynch there were bound to be some filmmakers who were going to cash in on this

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inventive style. Director/writer Bill Gaunce not only cashes in with *Since I Don't Have You*, but down right rips Lynch off.

I think the film is about this guy named Dwight. He's having these weird dreams in which this giant and midget try to help him find Laura Palmer's murderer—oh wait that's Dale Cooper. Anyway, these dreams lead Dwight to a farmhouse where he meets the Cavernaughes. Here the "fun" really begins as characters start dropping like flies and Dwight discovers the meaning of his on-going night-

ITAPES

The whole film is made up of one incoherent sequence after another with a story that can only be described as a mess. Mr. Gaunce even has the nerve to use the Lynchian

spotlight while Dwight sings the '50s standard "Since I Don't Have You." It makes me wonder if Mr. Gaunce had his actors call him Dave or Mr. Lynch. In the press kit we received it was stated that this was a first-time experience for all involved. Most people say your first time is always the best, but in this case it was really painful.

—D.B.J.

4

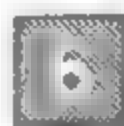
TONY VEGAS' ANIMATED ACIDBURN FLASHBACK TABOO

80min/Various Formats
Picture Start, Inc

When I received this tape I thought I should either watch this straight or wait until I had some hallucinatory drug to enhance the weirdness. Being a wimp, I decided to watch it straight just in case the box was right (i.e. flashback potential). I shouldn't have worried. Most of the so-called "graphic hallucinations" weren't! I mean this is a collection of thirteen 17-year-old cartoons. How much acid was going around in the late 70s early 80s anyway? Nothing here is incredibly bad but nothing here is that good either, so it figures that this gets a four. If you're looking for good "tripped out" ani-

mation rent some old Ralph Bakshi videos. Don't bother with this.

—D.P.



CAMPFIRE TALES

KB-Releasing
90min/Video

When I saw the box to this I thought it might actually be good. The box has some decent pictures on it (of gore effects) and the movie stars Gunnar Hansen (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) in a small part. I should learn not to get high hopes for a movie just because of the box. The movie is just a cheaply done *Creepshow* without the directing of Romero, the humor (albeit bad) of King and the special effects of Tom Savini. Besides these flaws it's not a really bad movie. The best of the four stories is about these two stoners who get hooked on this pot that literally tears you apart. The rest of the stories are all pretty average and unoriginal. When trying to find that anthology of horror stories you could do worse, but you definitely could do a lot better.

—D.P.

4

JOURNEY INTO THE BEYOND

VCII Home Entertainment
90min/Some kind of film

When I heard about this movie I thought, "Oh great, another *Paces of Death* ripoff." After watching it I was wishing it was! This is a 1970s movie in which the late John Carradine narrates a bunch of native rituals and cheesy church exorcisms. This thing is so '70s it even has a

"gore warning" before every grotesque display of bloodshed. A lot of this stuff is real, but some shit is so unbelievable it's funny. If you're looking for a documentary on weird and sick shit don't waste your time with this, just watch the news.

—D.P.

2

TALES OF FORENSIC MEDICINE

30min/Video
Demolition Films

Why did I bother watch this tape? (No, besides the fact that I was the one unlucky enough to open the envelope!) Maybe I should be asking why was it made in the first place. We've got a half hour (though it seems like days) of Dr. G.L. Witting relating "four of the strangest, most bizarre clinical case studies of death ever recorded in the twentieth century." And the tape is just that; Dr. Witting (real-life professor Bill Scott in a bizarre cross between Cubs announcer Harry Carey and Larry Bud Melman) talks about four different deaths. And talks. And talks. The writers try to make it lighthearted by injecting some humor into these incessant monologues, but either they can't write funny, Prof. Scott can't act funny, or both. Combine that with the clunky editing and a complete lack of charisma, and you've got a film that's just plain-sorry about the pun-dead!

—M.B.

5

HOLY MARY MOTHER OF GOD

10 min/Super 8

You can predict this movie

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within the first three minutes. Baptizing the viewer with a long intro using a nauseatingly fast moving camera, this flick opens on a Catholic priest cloistering himself in his bedroom filled with stuffed animals, porno magazines and an axe. He uses the latter (while dressed like a lumberjack with a ski mask) to bedevil some poor girl on close-circuit camera, the evening's entertainment for a blasphemous Inner Circle/secret handshake-type club. The rest of the film resembles the chase scene from (yet again) *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, yet still contains a few eye-widening bits. The best is the soundtrack (a backwards chant), which creates a nice Satanic atmosphere (and the neighbors love it, too). The ending came neither as a

surprise nor regretted event, especially after six minutes of clumsy pursuit.

—A.J.V.

1 STEEL FINGERS (THE MOVIE)

10 min/Video

A Don and Dave Production

Don and Dave erased a copy of *Night of the Living Dead* to dupe us a review copy of their movie, mistakenly leaving one *NOLD* scene in at the beginning of their (now FTVG's) tape. Bad mistake. They taped over a great flick to record a jerky, poor quality film about a hick with a mechanical hand (Freddy Krueger glove), walking around town wearing a mask (I think it's supposed to be his



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face) as he randomly rips abdomens out to the beat of heavy metal music. Far too much fake blood and leftover meat products masquerading as intestines soil this tape. Even at scanning speed, the movie is too long. The credits claim "The End... Or is it?" If it isn't the end, the filmmakers are more stupid than I thought.

—A.J.V.

7 REQUIEM FOR A WHORE

45min/Video

DiPaolo Prods.

Truthfully promoting itself as a "gritty" look at New York City prostitutes, Michael DiPaolo's semi-cinema verité examination of a working girl is nothing if not a perfect disclaimer that

should run at the head of each and every copy of the sanitized *Pretty Woman*. Without falling into the chasm of ritillation the swallowed Ken Russell's last effort on the subject, DiPaolo focuses on streetwalking's crudely simple business and survival tactics as seen through the eyes of one unfortunate—whose sense of future begins and ends with her pimp's demand that she star in a porn film later that week. Crosscutting images of her childhood rape within scenes of uncomfortable price negotiations and clumsy back-seat sex, DiPaolo effectively demonstrates that there is no glamour, fun or even profit in hooking.

Special mention should be made of Amy Wallin, whose compelling lead performance really makes the film.

—D.E.W.

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4

BLOODFEAST, ADVENTURES OF SGT. LUNCH, PART I

62 min/Video
No-Money Enterprises

The title definitely caught my attention. Unfortunately, the rest of the video didn't. Sgt. Lunch, a "supercop," must battle his evil "we don't need another actor" twin, named Feast. Lunch and Feast. What drugs were their parents on? Feast creates a Frankenstein-esque robot called the "Annihilator," who manages to find time to shoot some hoops for ten minutes of screen time in between blowing the crap out of everything. Feast frames poor Sgt. Lunch, who must redeem his tarnished reputation and

apprehend these dastardly villains. Ho-hum. They even copied *Terminator's* music. Steve Station, playing Feast and Lunch, looks clean cut enough to play the anal-retentive cop, but like everyone else in the film, has minimal acting skills. The martial arts and stunts looked slightly dangerous, so I wonder if these guys had insurance.

—A.J.V.



THE CONFESSIONS OF DR. MABUSE

8 min./Video
Dada-LoCo Production

I must confess, I have no idea what this was about, even after repeated viewings. Mabuse goes to confession with some bizarre priest who

sounds like a retarded man under heavy distortion. Moving from the confessional to his jail cell, Mabuse, looking like someone who plays too much Dungeons & Dragons, divulges his megalomaniacal philosophy to his captive audience. The priest asks him questions about his sins, but Mabuse dodges them as deftly as a U.S. Senator. His narration overlays a series of images, most of which were taken from other films, and some of which will give you the willies, if you dislike maggots or hermit crabs. However, they create only confusion, not terror. Mabuse's monologue follows the style of your friend and mine, Chuck Manson. But that's about it for eeriness in this NEA funded work of art. I always knew they were a bunch of psychos.

—A.J.V.



DOPE AMMO—665 1/2 NOT QUITE EVIL

Over 60min/Video
Ells Bells, Inc.

Although no expert on the BMX scene, this reviewer knows enough to say that watching street-cycling daredevils do contorted tricks is fun—even on video. However, more engaging than the cool (but repetitive) freestyling and the occasional aggro bike maneuvers that dominate this tape are the randomly inserted splices of subversion. The free-for-all mix of footage includes a baby's soured face as he eats infant mush, scenes from *Friday the 13th* and shots of an oft-naked cute chick will definitely keep your attention. Add to that the inclusion of subliminal

footage that will wear your VCR out trying to locate (trust me, it's there), and you have, if analyzed, a document of contemporary rowdy youth. Ah, but fuck that. Just watch this sucker, preferably at a party—Ells Bells and company seemed to have had one making it.

—G.A.



ANOTHER GIRL ANOTHER PLANET

12min/16mm
Cattlebone Productions

Definitely from another world. This is an nicely done artsy-fartsy film about an androgynous alien (?) person (?) who wears sunglasses and leather, but never says a word. Wandering into a modern art gallery, the "thing" is picked up by an artist who gets off on people who don't talk. Taking "it" home to look at some of her work (she actually wants a critic), she follows the pattern of most artists—dying young. Lots of post-apocalyptic shading, plus an ominous soundtrack and pretentious letter-boxing all help to set the mood for this way-out film. Great fare for MTV or Lynch, although I probably would've enjoyed it more if I had dropped acid before watching.

—A.J.V.



DAWN OF AN EVIL MILLENNIUM

20min/Super 8
Darksword Prod.

Dawn of an Evil Millennium is a mini-maniac thrill ride that only stops long enough to let you see the puke by the wayside. This hybrid of *Evil Dead* and *The Hidden* by

way of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* blazes with cartoonish abandon, threatening to scorch the cathode ray tube of your TV. Jokingly billed as a trailer for an "18 hour epic adventure coming for the summer of 2000," director Damon Packard has actually structured a small-scale tale of intergalactic doom in 1999 Los Angeles. If vomitous expulsions, self-mutilation and breakneck pacing don't grab you, then a cameo by Miles O' Keffe (Bo Derek's Tarzan himself) will. By utilizing his brain rather than his checkbook, Packard has cleverly used cheap effects like speeded-up filming and distorted dialogue to his advantage.

—G.A.

8 WAX OR THE DISCOVERY OF TELEVISION AMONG THE BEES

85min/Video & Film
David Blair & ZDF

For those familiar with Craig Baldwin's found footage frenzy *Tribulation 99*, Blair's *Wax or the Discovery of Television Among the Bees* is in the same vein—a seemingly myriad of illogical facts and trance-like imagery delivered in pseudo documentation. But *Wax* is its own movie, following the first person narration of space programmer/bee keeper Jacob Maker (Blair), grandson of "spiritual cinematographer" James "Hive" Maker (represented by the sage-like face of William Burroughs). Although shot mostly on video, the look is excellent, mainly because of computer-generated effects. The story follows the strange link between Mesopotamia bees, a

planet at the center of the Earth and the Afterlife. At feature length, viewers will know within the first five minutes whether they will be completely absorbed or scrambling for the eject button.

—G.A.

4 HILLTOP & T.V. EYE

13min/Super 8 & Video

These short films by John Duquette illustrate music's ability to deliver an extra punch to film. *Hilltop*, an almost somnambulant time-lapse study of a deserted drive-in, is shown twice, once with the serene strains of Ornette Coleman and again, at tape's end, with the tastily raucous Led Zep riffs of Tragic Mulatto. The inclusion of those tunes makes viewing bearable. However, having a kicking soundtrack is not enough when your flick lacks voyeuristic bite. In the neglected wife yarn *T.V. Eye*, the action is considerably different. The use of amusing dialog cards and sporadic shots of boob tube imagery are effective. But, although competently done, the results are boring, and in the end that's what counts the most to audiences.

—G.A.

8 THE VOLUP-TUOUS HORROR OF KAREN BLACK

30min/Video
Duckball Prods.

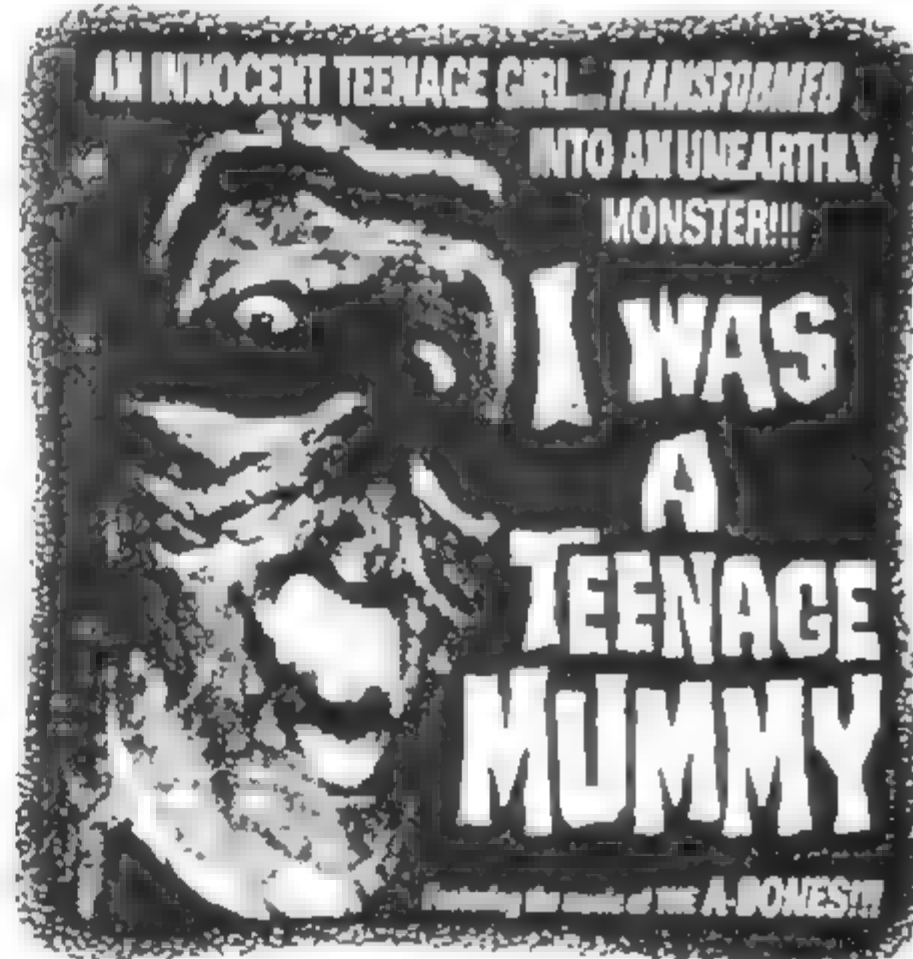
I generally hate homespun concert films, which usually amount to shots of the singer striking Robert Plant-style poses and the guitarist doing



Computer mayhem in *Wax* or *The Discovery of Television Among the Bees*.

power chords with his teeth. Thankfully, multimedia maven Kembra Pfahler's video calmed my preconceived fears in the first few seconds as artist Joe Coleman ended his

eloquently worded introduction by extinguishing a cigarette on his bearded cheek. And this was just the intro! As Pfahler's band Karen Black took the stage, I knew



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Vacuums and breasts in the wacky comedy **MR. FLATHEAD**.

Coleman's actions were necessary in order for his appearance to be even the least bit memorable. Pfahler's cloud of smoke entrance is a study in barely controlled chaos. Until guitarist Samoa begins letting go with his super grunge

licks, one barely knows what's happening behind the impenetrable white cloud lingering over the stage. Nude, with only a miniscule G-string and thin layer of blue body paint protecting her from NYC obscenity laws, Pfahler appears like some tribal deity ready to exact her vengeful wrath. Part performance art, part heavy metal and part Stoneage ritual, the following show is a screeching tribute to her concept of "Avail-

ablism," the usage of anything available (i.e. free or easily obtained), as cardboard props and crudely fashioned sets blend with Pfahler's atonal stylings. This is primitive entertainment at it's best.

—D.E.W.

6

MR. FLAT-HEAD

85min/Video
Scanline Prods.

The story, while heavy on sub-plots, is of your typical "let's put on a show" variety—but with a twist. Curiously prone to lightning strikes (which take place at strategic intervals), Harold (aka Mr. Flathead) tries to raise some rent money by "channeling" the likes of Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison via his mysteriously reactivated, '50s era television.

Great!

However, while inventive and occasionally very funny, this comedy succumbs to the same problem that plagues most shot-on-video projects—it's just too damn long! Several good jokes are telegraphed

far so in advance that the rest of the film never quite catches up, which made me as impatient as hell and immediately reaching for the fast-forward button. Fortunately, most of the humor is of the sight gag variety, which made it relatively easy to seek out the good (and sometimes very good) parts. Most notable was the scene in which an amnesia stricken Harold attempts to make a quick buck selling vacuums door-to-door—utilizing freshly ground-in dog shit to demonstrate the machine's suction power.

Well, I laughed.

—D.E.W.

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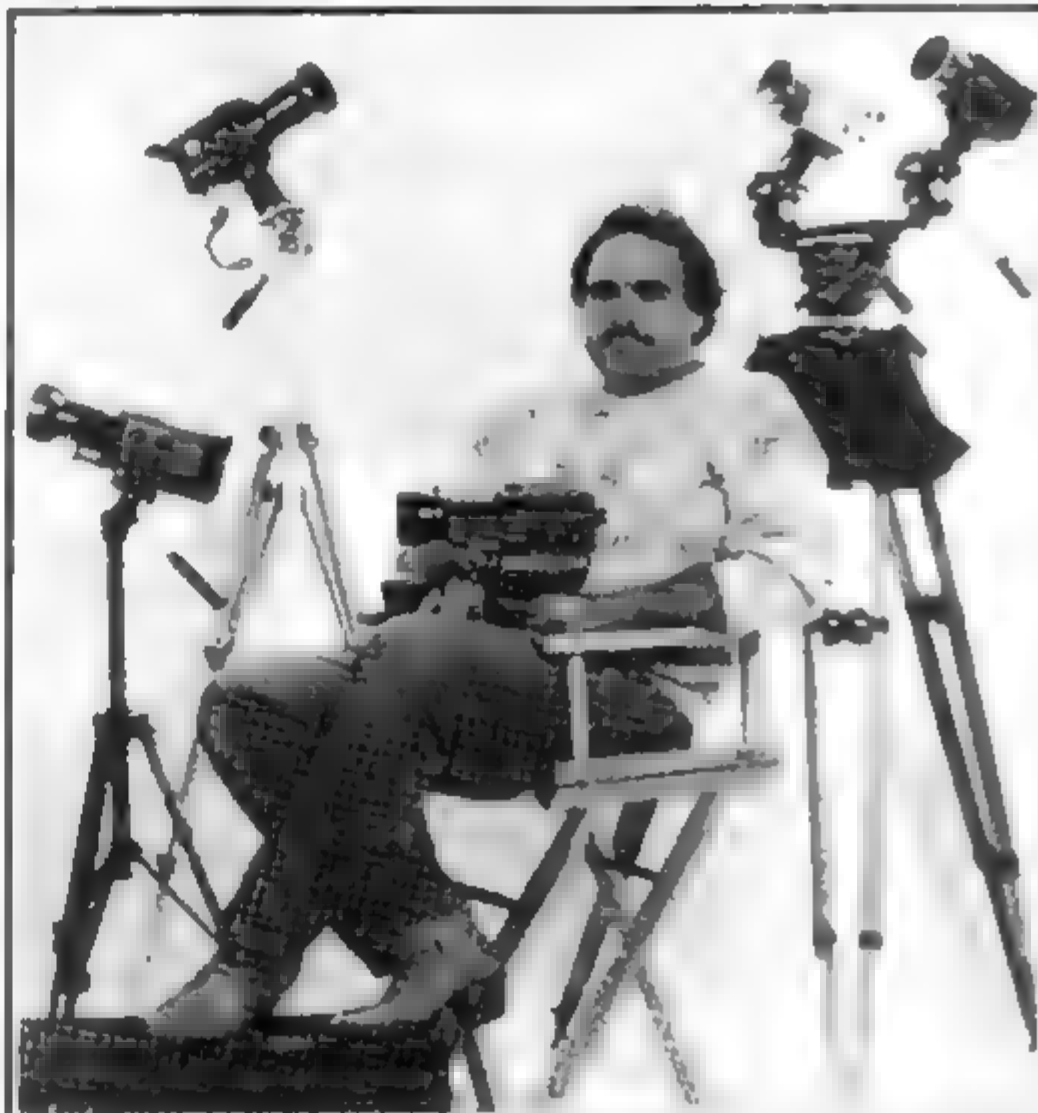
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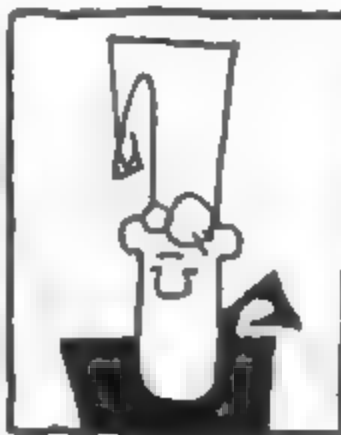


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- JERRY LEWIS' "THE DAY THE CLOWN CRIED"

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| 5/20 | 5:00 | "C. women of Nature" |
| | 7:00 | "Butterfly Wings" |
| 5/21 | 5:00 | got his autograph |
| | 7:00 | Tribute to Robert Wise |
| | 9:30 | with The Haunting |
| 5/22 | 5:00 | "Brief History of Time" |



DAY 7

| | | |
|------|------|-------------------------|
| 5/23 | 7:00 | "One Full Moon" |
| | 9:30 | "Hours and Times" |
| | Noon | "Brighter Summer Day" |
| | 2:15 | |
| | 4:30 | "Secret Face" |
| | 7:00 | "Spotswood" |
| | 9:30 | "Who Killed... Jesus?" |
| | MK | "Vegas In Space" |
| 5/24 | Noon | "Secret Festival" |
| | 2:15 | "Mexico" |
| | 4:30 | "Living Ends" |
| | 7:00 | "Scene by the Sea" |
| | 9:30 | "Brief History of Time" |

| | | |
|------|------|-------------------------|
| 5/25 | Noon | "Not Mozart" (on video) |
| | 2:15 | HARVARD EXIT |
| | 4:30 | "South" (on video) |
| | 7:00 | "Swordsmen" |
| | 9:30 | "John Lurie ..." |
| 5/26 | 5:00 | "The Tombs" |
| | 7:00 | "Cloud" |
| | 9:30 | "Because ... Woman" |



DAY 13

| | | |
|------|------|----------------------------|
| 5/27 | 5:00 | "The Station" |
| | 7:00 | "On Earth ... Heaven" |
| | 9:30 | "Daddy ... Academy" |
| 5/28 | 5:00 | "In the Abyss ... Charles" |
| | 7:00 | "Road to the Rascals" |
| | 9:30 | "Scorpion's Gardens" |
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ATED INTO A TRADITIONAL
B.A. CONTEST.

A TEAM OF SURGEONS IS WORKING FEVERISHLY TO REVIVE HIS SOCIAL LIFE.

REVENGE OF BILLY THE KID
Great Britain 1991

PLEASE NOTE THIS FILM CONTAINS MATERIAL THAT WILL
BE DISTURBING FOR SOME VIEWERS

| Time | 5/30 | 5/31 | 6/1 | 6/4 | 6/5 | 6/6 | 6/7 |
|---|----------------------|------|-----|---|--------|------------|-----|
| 9:30 | Coke Hollister | | | | | | |
| Noon | "Cloud" | | | "Mama" | "Mama" | "Somebody" | |
| 2:15 | "Because... Women" | | | 5:00 | 5:00 | 2:15 | |
| 4:30 | "Scorpion's Garden" | | | 7:00 | 7:00 | 4:30 | |
| 7:00 | "Zovars" - "Hot!" | | | 9:30 | 9:30 | 7:00 | |
| 9:30 | "Dead at the Moon" | | | | | 9:30 | |
| Mid | "Revenge of Billy" | | | | | Mid | |
| Noon | "Secret Festival" | | | | | Noon | |
| 2:15 | "Path of the Brave" | | | | | 2:15 | |
| 4:30 | "Zazam!" | | | | | 4:30 | |
| 7:00 | "Secrets" | | | | | 7:00 | |
| 9:30 | "Highway Patrolman" | | | | | 9:30 | |
| 5:00 | NW Filmmakers Shorts | | | | | | |
| 7:00 | "The Enquiries" | | | | | | |
| 9:30 | "American Orpheus" | | | | | | |
|  <p>DAY 19</p> | | | |  <p>DAY 24</p> | | | |





small white house

WHAT DO TIJUANA, John Wayne Gacy and corprophelia have to do with the assassinations of J.F.K. and Marilyn Monroe? Well, if you happen to be writer/director Richard Newton, everything—thusly making his feature, *small white house*, a welcomed psychedelic antidote to Oliver Stone's semi-factual Camelot obsessions.

Working with a pallet of brilliant colors and unusual textures, Newton delves deeply into the absurdly surreal with a *Jack + Jackie + Marilyn = Murder* equation that, though leaving several variables unsolved, boasts, by far, the funniest Zapruder film reinterpretation this side of the Warren Commission. The film begins with the arrival of beautiful and experimental Jackie (Cristina Kuta) and her skateboard-toting beau, Johnny (Orb Kamm), in the decadent border town famous for its fabled equestrian performance art. Quickly falling prey to the seductive ploys of a street hustler named Plato (Enrico Boettcher), whose voyeuristic tendencies lead them further and further through sexual experimentation, the pair engage in various acts of loosely defined eroticism, each of which culminate in director Newton's slow-mo replay of an assassin's bullet striking Johnny. Back and to the left, *back and to the left, BACK AND TO THE LEFT* his head snaps as Jackie scrambles after a baseball cap sliding



Photo By: Basil Kerson

Mary Lynne and Jackie are two strange babes.

By David E. Williams

off the tail end of their open-topped limo. The image is chilling, even in parody.

Fiction strays further from fact when Jackie becomes infatuated with Mary Lynne (Heather Elias) a lithe, goddess-like blonde with a quickly lost schoolgirl shyness. The three soon engage in matrimony—at Jackie's insistence—with Mary's subsequent role confusion leading to an OD via a cereal bowl of pharmaceuticals.

In a film rife with goopy food textures, it's not surprising to see that gelatin capsules don't stay crunchy in milk.

Although almost completely devoid of the standard bump-and-grind that seemingly stands as the sole incarnation of Hollywood sex, *small white house* features the lingering odor of a kinkiness that's probably far more normal than most people would admit outside their bedrooms. Let's just say the term "bodily fluid" takes on different definitions.

Casually dismissed by the supposedly accepting and oh-so-supportive alternative press as a minor aberration here in the U.S., Newton's gorgeously photographed and richly decadent accomplishment has received accolades from abroad.

Small wonder. **JTYG**

Opposite: Mary Lynne (Heather Elias) responds to Jackie's (Christina Kuta) provocation, "Piss on me. . . piss on my cunt."

SCOTCH TAPE, SHOESTRINGS & SUPER 8:

THE SECRETS BEHIND
KUNG FU RASCALS'
NO-BUDGET SPFX

Interview by Merle Bertrand





Though it's impossible to make something out of absolutely nothing, cowriter/director/star STEVE WANG, visual effects coordinator/costar WYATT WEED and sound engineer/costar LES CLAYPOOL explain how they managed to give Kung Fu Rascals million dollar effects for far less than the Terminator 2 crew spent on lunch every day (and without the high-tech hardware).

IN THE SPRING OF 1989, my partner Jeff Stolhand and I decided to make an ultra-low-budget feature film based on the shorts we had previously done at the University of Texas at Austin. Over the course of the next two years, we toiled away until finally—and proudly—we debuted the fruits of our labor: an action-adventure comedy titled *Quest For the Monkey God*. I thought we had really accomplished something, that we had stretched the boundaries of the medium in some way. Then I saw Steve Wang's *Kung Fu Rascals* and was seriously hating life.

While I appreciate the good points of my own film, *Kung Fu Rascals* transcends anything I've ever seen in low-budget filmmaking. Hell, it's more impressive than most of the multi-million dollar efforts the studios crank out every year. Why? Not because it looks so much better, but because it looks and feels just as good—and *didn't* cost millions. Like the giant stone gods Nio Titan and Meta Sparta, who slug it out in the film's climax, *KFR* towers over the movies that other independents are producing, in part because Wang and many of his collaborators are members of the Hollywood community. They know the ins and outs of filmmaking from the trenches—as grips, assistants and effects people. And it's from this perspective that Wang attacked his project, with some inside knowledge, a degree of talent and a lot of imagination.

Unlike the major studios though, Wang wasn't able to simply throw

money at his production problems—mainly because he didn't have any. Instead, Wang & Co. had to solve them with what many simpleton critics describe as "movie magic:" Special effects.

But there were no blue screens, computer controlled cameras or optical printing. No, that would be too easy, and worst of all, too expensive. So, like the grandfather of special effects, Georges Méliés, who astounded audiences with his 1902 silent film *A Trip to the Moon*, Wang relied on deceptively simple in-camera tricks to get his shots. Like a magician, Wang fools the audience into believing his illusions rather than impressing them with the real thing. Instead of building the whole frigging ship, like Spielberg did for his miserable mess *Hook*, Wang just fakes a portion and than seamlessly cuts to the miniature.

Fortunately, Wang is most unmagician-like in his glee to spill the secrets of his celluloid trickery.

So, along with sound guru Les Claypool and visual effects coordinator Wyatt Weed, Wang explained to me how he figuratively pulled rabbits out of hats (and then some) for virtually nothing.

What first struck me about Kung Fu Rascals was that from the very first frame, it just seemed like it's much bigger than most movies like it. The sound effects, the music, the dramatic opening and the letterbox format, all that stuff just made it seem like a much bigger movie.

STEVE WANG: Well, I knew the limitations of what we had—the budget, the locations and what we could actually put in front of the camera, on film. I knew we had to at least try to make everything seem as "big budget"



"I tried to put a little more than what we could actually afford into it. I didn't want people to get the feeling that this was an amateur film."—STEVE WANG

as possible. My main thing was that if this film was going to get in a video store next to *Indiana Jones*, I wanted it to be at least somewhat comparable so someone wouldn't say, "OH, *INDIANA JONES!*...oh, *Kung Fu Rascals*." Even though we can't compare the two, I tried to put a little more than what we could actually afford into it. I didn't want people to get the feeling that this was an amateur film.

What do you think was the main approach you took to reach that goal?

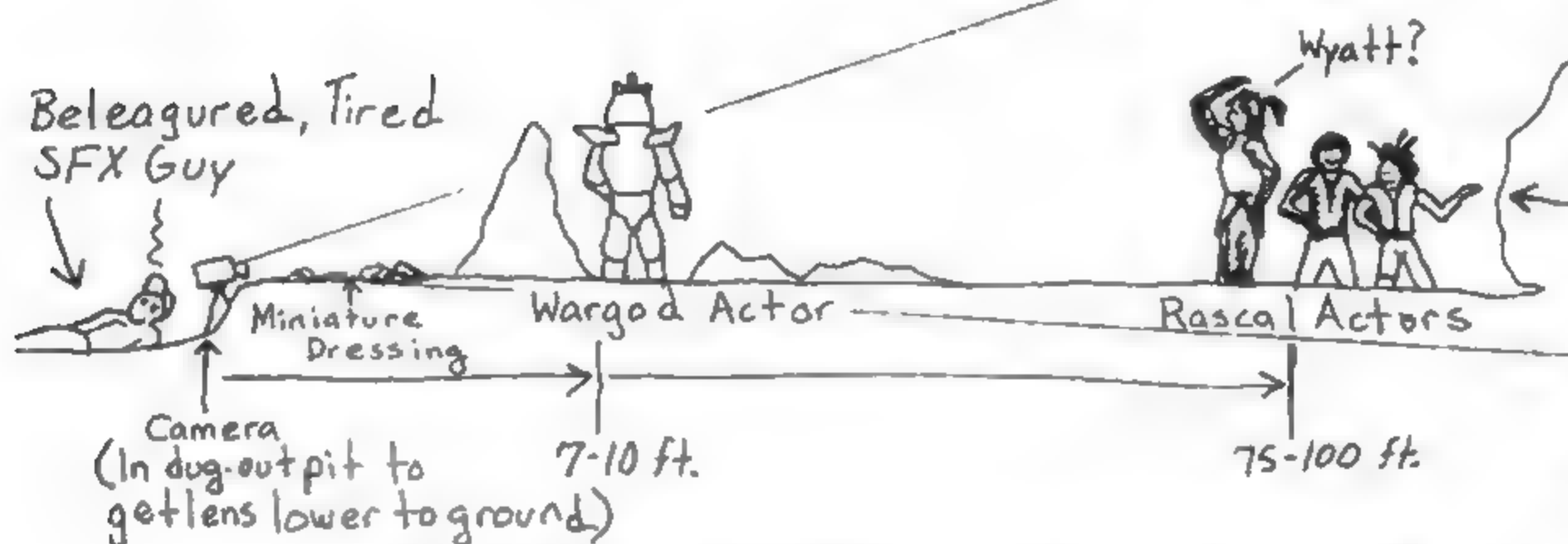
SW: Well, one thing I've observed, just as a filmmaker—and I'm still very new at it—is that the sense of a film's size and scope is built on how

you visualize things and put them on film. If you get two guys, with the same camera, same sets, same actors and say, "Okay, these are the shots you're gonna do. I want you to do a medium shot of this, and do a wide shot of this, and so on." The person who has a more creative eye for the cinema will give you a more bigger and dynamic look—even though they're doing the same kinds of shots with the same materials—as opposed to somebody who really maybe doesn't have an eye for it. I think, to a certain extent, I have some amount of talent for this kind of stuff and was able to at least put what I think looks good on film. But it takes time. You can put something in front of the camera, look at it and say, "Yeah, this looks good," or, what actually happens more often when you're shooting, you'll spend an hour setting it up, be ready to go and say, "No, no, wait, no! This really looks bad, let's think of a new shot."

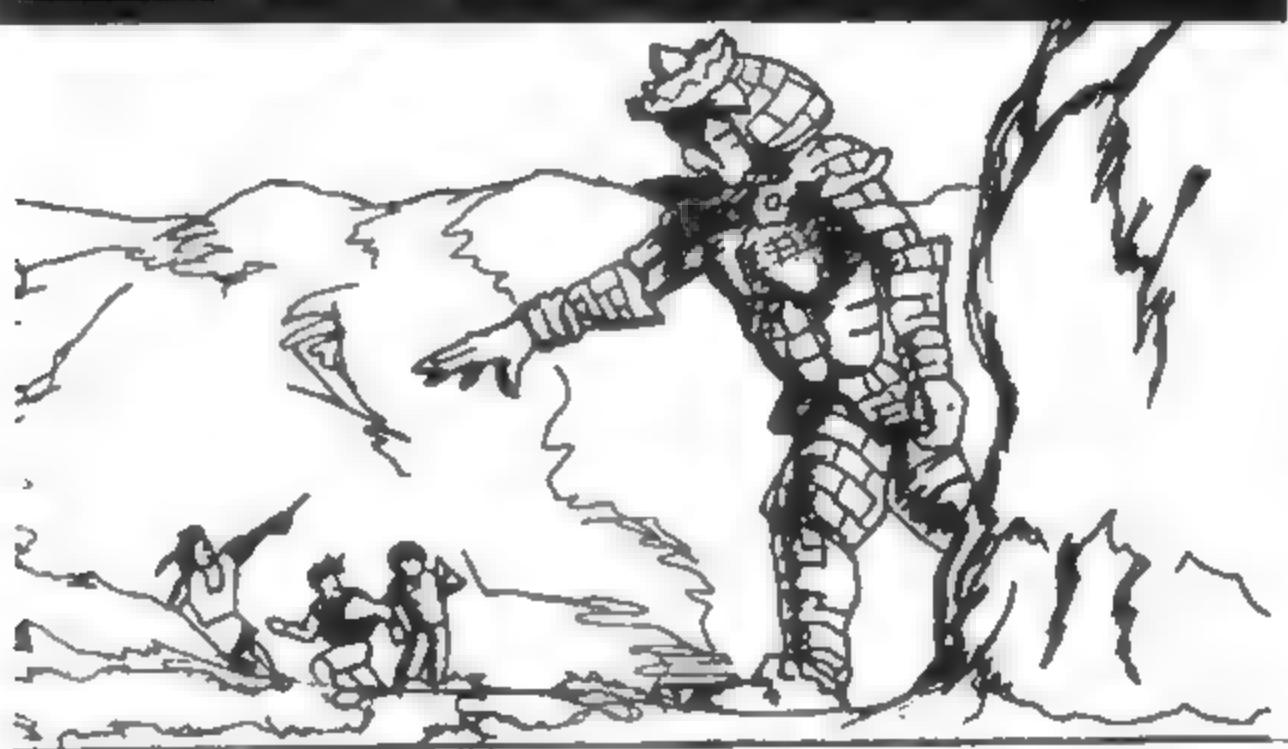
LES CLAYPOOL: Also, I think everybody involved was either doing what they do for a living or doing what they wanted to do for a living. Everybody put in a lot of heart and soul and went the extra mile to make it work. Even with the time and budget constraints, they still wanted to make it as good as possible, to showcase their work.

WYATT WEED: Ideally, that's what you should do in any film you work on. But Steve knew exactly what he wanted. But if you had an idea and if you wanted to really go for it, he wouldn't stop you. If he needed this much work to get a shot, but you wanted to do ALL THIS WORK, he would say, "Okay, go ahead," If it got ridicu-

TO THE OBSERVER...



TO THE CAMERA...



Nio Titan chases Rascals from behind cliff, across frame...

Illustration by Wyatt Weed

lous—if it was unnecessary—he'd stop it. But as a matter of people asking, "Steve, if I give you all of this, can you use it?" he would say, "Sure, I can." [Everyone laughs] So people would think, "Wow! Cool! I have creative authority! Let's go!"

WAR GODS DONE EASY

In any effects-driven film there are specific shots or sequences that must work in order to convince the audience of what they are



Digging in: To get the proper angle for the shot, the camera had to be exactly at ground level.

seeing—There are some specific shots in KFR that I'd like to get some background on and an explanation how you did 'em. The scene that impresses most people has got to be the stone war gods battle at the end. SW: Yeah. The shot that I think stands out in that sequence was when the Rascals were running out from behind the rock chased by Nio-Titan. It was beyond an effects shot—it looked real.

WW: I have two favorite shots in the film and that's one of them. I call that particular shot the "Jason And The Argonauts shot" because it's like

The War Gods!



Built by Eddie Yang (see sidebar pg. 41), the Meta-Sparta suit was made of slush-molded latex attached to a fiberglass framework. The sunny beach location played havoc with Ted Smith's Spartan performance, requiring each scene to be broken up in order to minimize overheating. Low camera angles gave the giant his illusion of size and height. (BELOW)



Talos, the big bronze god coming up the beach in that film.

For the people who haven't got a clue, what basic effects techniques did that particular shot require?

WW: The key was what's called forced perspective, which is basically tricking the camera's depth of field. [See sidebar "Forced Perspective for Morons" pg. 46] You're either placing same-size objects different distances from the camera but lining them up so that they appear to be on the same plain or you're taking different-sized items and literally forcing the perspective. I think special effects is a constant process of reminding yourself of what's been done; every time you attempt a new special effects shot, you



should refresh yourself on all the old techniques and figure out which is the best one to use. Sometimes you're sitting there lamenting over an effects shot for weeks and the solution is right there in front of your face, you just temporarily forgot about it. I'd been doing forced perspective and hanging miniature stuff myself years ago and I had just sort of forgotten about it. You get caught up in modern effects and you think blue screen and computer animation and all that crap. So the first thing I did was try to find a depth of field chart for Super 8. If you get the *American Cinematographer's* manual it's got 35



Meta-Sparta's Godzilla-like rise from the sea was accomplished in a series of shots, beginning with a bubbling close-up (RIGHT), which was filmed with just the head in a local pool (LEFT). Getting him to the beach (TOP RIGHT) was another problem as the war god suit was clumsy even in light surf.



and 16mm charts. You know, how much light for what depth of field, but it doesn't list Super 8. To my knowledge, I don't know of anybody who lists a guide for Super 8, but I figured out that it all scales down. It's roughly half of what 35mm was for 16mm, and so Super 8 is roughly half of what the 16mm figures were. So then we went out and shot a roll of test footage at the beach and tried each shot a couple of different ways.

SW: Which is a smart thing, by the way. Anybody that wants to do stuff like this should always shoot tests. We tried out a lot of the same shots we did in the film with just us and no costumes, just running around. We checked exposures, depth of field, everything, just to make sure that this was gonna work.

WW: We took all that configuration charting that I'd done and basically put it to the test on one roll. And if the formula said, "If it's five feet from the camera and they're 35 feet from the camera and it's F16, set the focus at . . ." we did it and, lo and behold, it worked.

Some people get really hung up on depth of field because they want to know how and why it works—as opposed to just knowing that it does and using it. So how exactly did you set up the shot of Nio-Titan chasing the Rascals?

WW: It was one of those lucky things where we found a nice location that would really work for us. We dug a pit, dropped the camera down until it was perfectly straight and level with the background cliff and the foreground rock. So, if you put a toy army man right in front of the camera and you had a guy standing in the background, they looked like they were standing on the same plane. Then we smoothed out the foreground sand and pulled out all the oversized seaweed. We had miniature seaweed that we could dress in. I put in some miniature rocks to hide some of the trouble spots, got our guys back there for a quick dry run, got our costume guy in and then eyeballed the scene through the camera to see if it looked as if they

Low-Budget EFX Carved In Stone

THE IMAGINATION

T behind *Kung Fu Rascals* peaks with our heroes' confrontation with the menacing Nio-Titan, a detailed stone-like statue summoned by the forces of evil. To counter this problem, the goodness of the universe beckons Meta-Sparta, an equally challenging opponent from the sea. The towering duo face off in an enormous slugfest...

Well, in all actuality, the stone effigies are really latex and fiberglass, created by artist Eddie Yang. The basic good and evil dichotomy here takes on distinct Eastern characteristics provided by Yang whose creations are inspired by similar statues near Kyoto, Japan.

A veteran sculptor for renowned effects artist Rick Baker, Yang still eagerly accepted the responsibilities that normally come with a low-budget feature. He even played the wargod Neo-Titan, for which Yang practiced martial arts in addition to partly choreographing the on-screen battle. "I thought the characters would be really cool on screen," he says. Creative freedom seems to be the catalyst for his enthusiasm since *KFR*'s low budget quickly vaporized into *no budget*. "The funds weren't there and you had to dig into your own pocket," he remembers. "When you can't hire personnel, it takes longer 'cause you gotta do everything yourself."

What began as a 15-minute trailer using only the front half of the Nio-Titan character grew into an almost two hour epic utilizing two full war god suits. At the time, Yang was hard at work on *Gremlins 2*, plus moonlighting in order to design and produce the wargod effects. Director Steve Wang completely trusted the effects man with the project, never seeing the suits until they were finished. The only detail that the two of them did discuss beforehand was the on-screen dimensions of the magical giants. "I remember us eating at McDonald's and Steve pointing to a palm tree, saying, '[They're] supposed to be that tall,'" Yang recalls. And by a simple but ingenious use of forced perspective, their vision was realized—the stone god's "towering" stature is realistically enhanced before your very eyes.

Indeed, Yang is proud of his creation. The overall effect blows away many of the major studio's miniature sets or phony blue screens. In fact, the twin titans' believability could compare favorably with the mega-sized baby in *Honey, I Blew Up The Kid*. But one question remains: Will there be *KFR* war gods models? According to Yang, "Yes! Steve has talked to me about that and if the deal comes through I am contracted to do the Meta-Sparta and Nio-Titan kits." For modeling enthusiasts this will breathe a breath of fresh air into a stale atmosphere of generic King Kong and balding Colossal Men kits. •



Eddie Yang in Nio-Titan garb.

—Chris O' Flaberty

CRASH BANG BOOM

Most filmmakers ignore the the audio aspect of their film until post production, settling for stock music and assorted effects. Fortunately for *Kung Fu Rascals*, director Wang was able to rely on Les Claypool for his soundtrack. With this chart, Claypool explains how he built an alternate aural world. (If you get lost in the techno-babble, see Les' handy dictionary for help.)

Illustrations and text by Les Claypool

#1



1" video master with time code on track #3 and audio tracks #1 and #2 clear (silent). Film was shot without sound!!!

#2



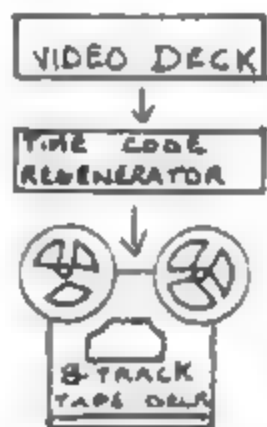
1/2" VHS work copies (3) with regenerated time code from 1" video master on track #2. Code also superimposed onto picture for reference. Two VHS copies were worn out by end of post.

#3



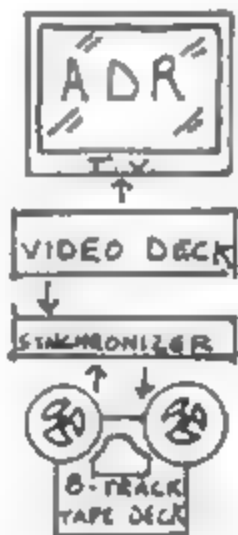
Watch film with director to determine ADR, music and sound EFX cues referenced to on screen time code ("spotting session"). Ritual suicide is contemplated after seeing how much work is needed.

#4



Regenerate new time code from video work copy onto track #8 of audio deck. Three separate sets of eight tapes were created (one set each for music, ADR and sound effects).

#5



Actors watch picture and recreate performance in sound proof (sort of!) room. Director (Steve) and engineer (Les) watch per-

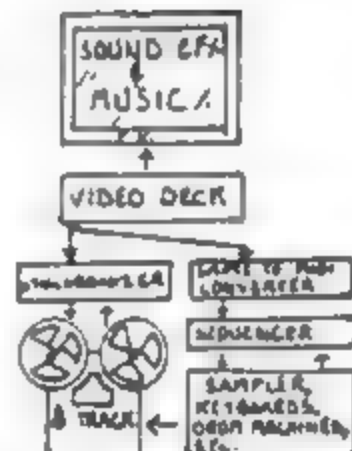
formances from inside control room and record them onto various tracks of audio deck. Audio deck is "locked" to the video deck via the synchronizer. Steve has watched his own movie too many times and can sync all of the actor's lines better than they can! After numerous 14 to 18 hour days, our descent into madness has begun!!!

#6



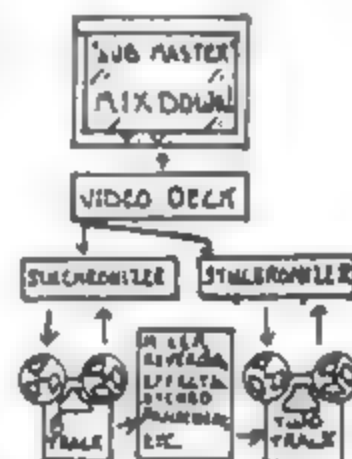
Les locks Steve into foley room with orders to "foley your own damn movie." Then Les creates all "Hard EFX" with sampler and occasionally slides food products under foley room door to the increasingly insane director. Foley is built up one track at a time. Four or Five-tracks are then bounced ("sub-mixed") over to either track #7 (mono) or tracks #6 and #7 (stereo). The original tracks are then erased, making room for additional foley, ambience loops, and sound effects from the sequencer and sampler.

#7



Sequencer is "locked" to the video deck via the SMPTE-to-MIDI converter. Sound EFX in sampler are played live to picture using a music keyboard. Performance is recorded and played back by sequencer. After hundreds of sound EFX "hits" are stored in sequencer, they can be recorded onto a single track of tape! Music is done in much the same way replacing sound EFX with musical instruments.

#8



Eight-track and two-track (stereo) decks are both "locked" to video deck. ADR, music and sound EFX are each mixed separately to picture creating three sets of stereo "submaster". Stereo panning, reverbs, and other effects are also added at this time. Some music elements went directly to the two track, bypassing the Eight-track. With a

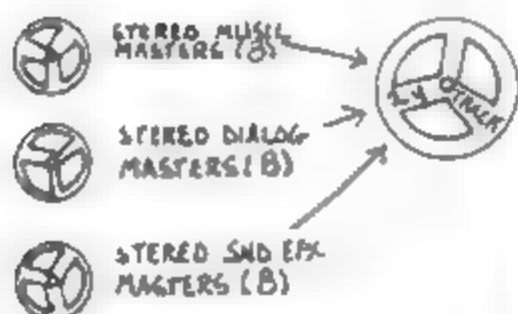
were standing on the same ground. If it looked good and lined up we got everybody into costume and put in the miniature sand, which would be just inches from the lens. We couldn't put that sand in too early because it would blow away. The smaller foreground rock, which Nio-Titan would actually come from behind, didn't look quite as detailed and natural as the background cliff so we dusted it with Fuller's Earth to make it the same color. The final thing I did for that shot was to take a big bucket of water

and pour it along the foreground miniature beach to make the surf line continue from the real, background beach. I had even gone so far as to sculpt miniature surf rocks. I probably could've gone out and found them, but I was kind of overzealous at this point. [All laugh] We also swept the entire area to take out all the footprints by people coming by and walking through. But there are other things that made the shot work. Eyelines are really important when you're doing forced perspective shots.

Sometimes it's as simple as telling an actor on the set, "Okay, look up, look up. . . keep looking. . . okay! Remember the position of your head, where you're at right now is perfect, because it looks to the camera as if you're looking up at a fifty foot war god!" And then, to the war god actor, you say, "Look down, look down...okay, stop! That's fine!" So we had to get the eyelines on those guys down right because, if you watch that shot, the Nio-Titan walks in and reaches directly for the Rascals.

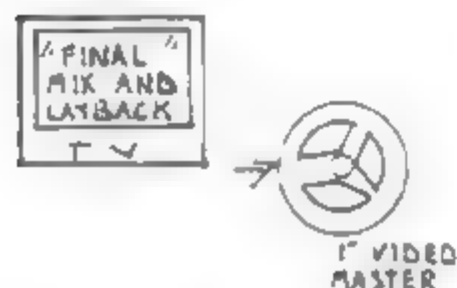
"real" budget, all elements could have been assembled on a 24-track eliminating the need for separate sets of tapes and "sub-masters."

#9



The three separate sets of stereo masters are then transferred over to six tracks of a 24-track deck. This places all elements on a single deck to simplify final mix.

#11



Separate music, ADR, and sound EFX tracks are mixed down into stereo onto two open tracks of 24-track. This creates a final stereo mix of all elements. 24-track deck is then "locked" to a 1" video layback deck and final mix is transferred to open tracks #1 and #2 on 1" video master. Only days after swearing never to go through this hell again, we're itching for more. Oh God help us!!!

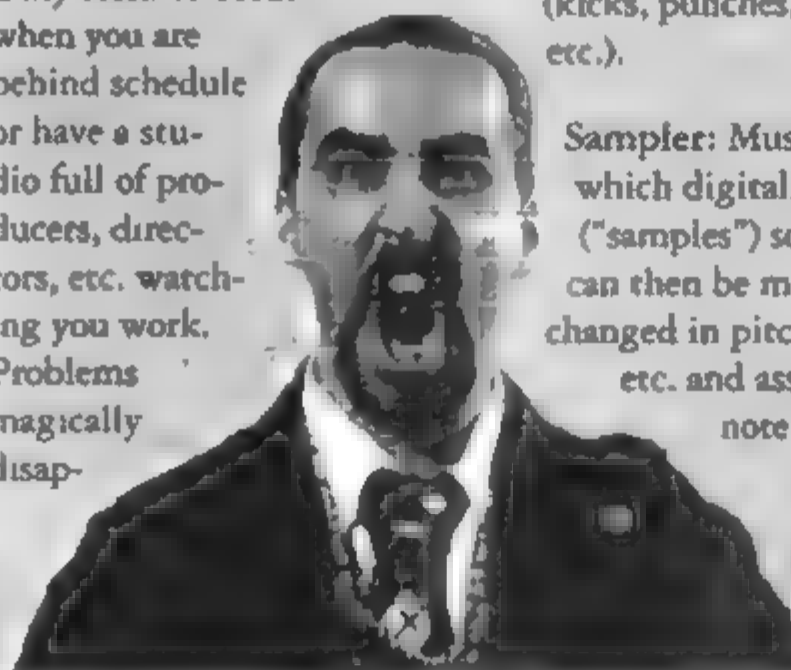
"AUDIO TERMS"

SMPTE Time Code: Frame accurate (usually!) sync tone used in video production. Must be generated from video pulse (picture) to create one time code "word" for each video frame. Should always be "1st generation." Regenerate, never "dub."

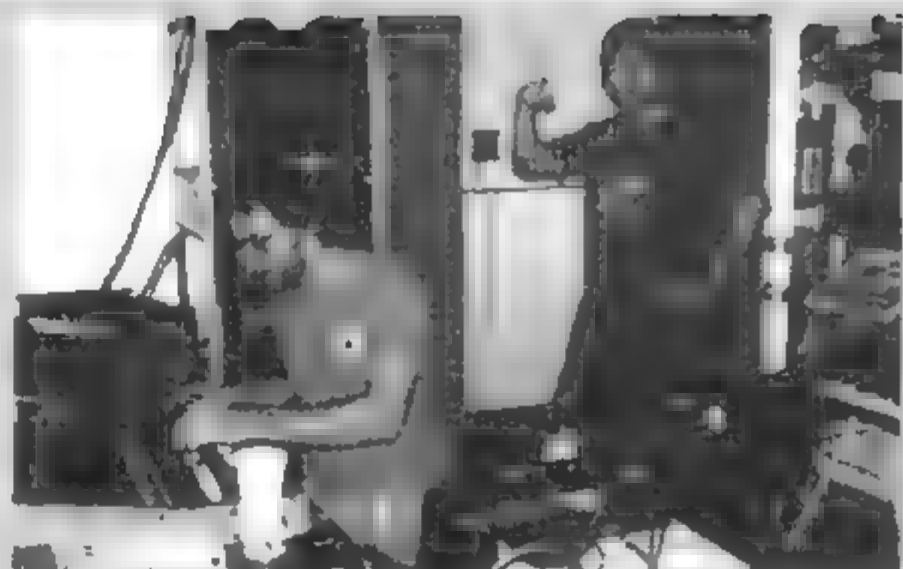
Window Burn: Time code display "burned" into video picture for easy reference. Display consists of hours, minutes, seconds, frames and sub-frames.

Synchronizer: Device which "reads" time code on master deck (video) and slave decks (audio), compares code then speeds up or slows down all slave decks until all decks are in sync ("locked").

Time Code Errors: Twisted, evil events which cause tape decks to slip out of "lock." Only seem to occur when you are behind schedule or have a studio full of producers, directors, etc. watching you work. Problems magically disappear.



Les also plays the film's evil Sheriff of Ching Wa County.



Wang and Claypool clown in the studio.

pear after session is cancelled and everyone leaves.

SMPTE to MIDI converter: Device which allows sequencer to "lock" to time code. This allows music or sound EFX to be in sync with picture.

Sequencer: Device which can store notes played on a keyboard (or other musical instrument) into computer memory. Since it only stores the performance (i.e. which keys were hit, how hard and/or how long they were hit, etc.), any sound can be assigned to any key (kicks, punches, car crashes, etc.).

Sampler: Musical instrument which digitally records ("samples") sound. Sounds can then be mixed, reversed, changed in pitch and length, etc. and assigned to any note on a keyboard.

Gunshots and explosions can be mixed and lowered in pitch to create footsteps and punches of "war gods."

ADR (Automatic Dialog Replacement): Actors watch performance and repeat dialog, grunts, etc. in recording studio. Absolutely nothing automatic about this torture!

Foley: Named after its inventor George Foley, it is the art of recreating footsteps, clothes rustling and countless other sounds "live to picture" in the recording studio.

Ambience Loops: Recreation of background sounds such as birds, crickets, wind, traffic, crowds, rain, etc. by creating a seamless "loop". For every scene you hide a world of audio evils, including changes in background sound on different takes of production dialog.

Ambience loops are essential for smooth professional sound audio tracks. •

Why'd you go with such ancient techniques? I mean, today you have computers and blue screen matte effects and all this kind of stuff.

SW: I did what I knew that we could do with the resources I had with my friends' amount of experience in different fields. It wasn't really a decision that I consciously had to make. It was just that this is what we could afford to do—we could set something up in front of a camera and shoot it.

LC: Also, the in-camera shots seem to

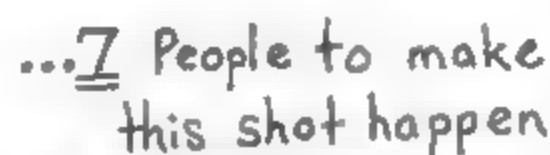
look more real, warmer. They don't have that electronic fake edge that you get from blue screens or mattes.

SW: Yeah. I've had people who've actually seen *Kung Fu Rascals* who are big fans of these types of movies come up to me and look just completely blown away at how these things were done. They say, "I can't believe that! I watch these old Ray Harryhausen films or any of these modern day movies, and they're cool and stuff, but your stuff is so real!"

How did you do that?" [All laugh] The problem is that we're brought up in a generation so used to watching blue screen effects that we've lost our appreciation for real illusions. With the in-camera stuff there's no matte lines. . . it's real. It's there in front of you. You've seen all the new high-tech stuff and you can tell they're obviously some sort of optical effects. Whereas here, there were no optical effects. It's just in front of the camera.

Another great shot is when we look down

The Solid Victor



A black and white illustration of a skeletal figure with long, thin arms and a large, open mouth, set against a background of stone blocks. A large arrow points to the right.

Illustration by Wyatt Weed

Rasputin steps aside, camera rack-focus' to reveal Me-Sha, The Spider Witch!

WW: Once again, pre-planning and storyboarding made it happen. On that particular shot, we'd gone out and scouted a cliff location to know how high it was gonna be and the

pavement like it had collapsed. I had the shots blown up to 8x10 and then cut the two figures out, so they had no background. We took those cut-outs and put 'em on a large piece of plate glass. The glass was in front of the camera on a stand on the cliff looking down at the beach where we had our two actors. Essentially, what the shot

boils down to is a plate of glass with a couple pictures glued to it, so it's an in-camera matte effect. [See diagram on pg. 47]

That's wild. So the only live actors in the shot were the two actually on the beach.

WW: Exactly. I shouldn't ruin it for the audience, but if you really look at the shot carefully you'll see the waves wash up to the war god laying down. And if you notice, they kinda roll right through him and come out the far side. That's how you can tell it was a fake.

SW: You know what's funny though? Most people who have seen that have come up later and told me, "How did you get the wave to go around and to the inside of his leg?" [Laughs] Their mind is thinking, "That looks good. The wave washed around it."

What helped the illusion of the crunching-stone sounds of the war gods moving? How did you create those effects?

LC: It was a combination of two different things. I went out and got this huge stepping stone, like the kind that you'd put in your back yard, gave it to Steve and said, "Go out into the Foley room and make stone war god sounds!" And what Steve did, is got another big brick and just kept smashing it on top of a big stone. As we recorded the Foley, we pitch-shifted it down an octave and then, later on, when we bounced that track to another track, mixed it with other things. Prior to that final mix, though, we put it together with computer sounds that I had created of a huge granite block being dragged across the ground. Then, I timed 'em to the pictures as I was dumping them into the computer. If you listen to it really loud in hi-fi stereo, it'll rock the walls!

SPAWNING THE SPIDER WITCH

Mee Sha, The Spider Witch made only a brief appearance at the end of the movie, but was another effect that added a lot of production value.

(RIGHT) At 1/3 scale the Witch body was sculpted by Aaron Sims and molded in foam latex for flexibility.



(LEFT) The 18" Witch has two rods attached to her torso for body movement and two more for main arm control. The four other arms were rigged with monofilament. (BELOW) Decked out in her Sims-made dress, Mee Sha, The Spider Witch is ready for the camera.



son inside this design—it was just physically impossible. So there were two ways we could do it: Build a large, full-size puppet, or build a small-size puppet, both of which are old-fashioned methods as opposed to everything being done nowadays with computer graphics. We decided we couldn't do a full-size puppet because it would take up too much time and money, so we designed and built a 1/3 scale version to be used within a forced perspective miniature castle set, which was constructed by Ted Smith, who incidentally also played Dar-Ling. Aaron



(ABOVE LEFT) Raspmutant, The Mad Monk, in clay sculpture form. Foam latex appliances were later made from the resulting mold. (ABOVE) Make-up being applied to Wyatt Weed by Aaron Sims, and (BELOW LEFT) as seen on screen. The get-up was so hot that outdoors shooting became nearly unbearable.



Sims, who was Ba-Foon, sculpted the main body of the Witch and made her dress and I sculpted the head and the hands.

To actually get the shots took some preparation, but the most difficult and important was one in which we would see both the Witch and Raspmutant in the same frame with him in the foreground turning back to see her open her kimono and reveal her spider-body. [See diagram on pg. 44] The

first part was setting the focus so the depth of field would be great enough that they would both be in sharp focus. After we got the Witch and set put together I sat in the foreground, which is where Raspmutant would be, and we put the camera in front and figured out a mutual focus point—although I think we actually lacked focus as he turned around. We just tried to line it up so that it looked as if Raspmutant and the Witch were

Forced Perspective For Morons

When a lens is focused on a subject, not only will it be rendered sharp, but objects some distance in front of and some distance behind the subject will be in acceptable focus. This zone of acceptably sharp focus is called the "Depth Of Field" focus, and is an important factor in choosing which lens you use for a shot. Other things being equal, the more powerful a telephoto you use, the shallower will be it's DOF. This means that if you are shooting a moving object whose distance from you is changing, you will need to follow focus, or "pull focus," during the shot to keep the subject within the DOF.

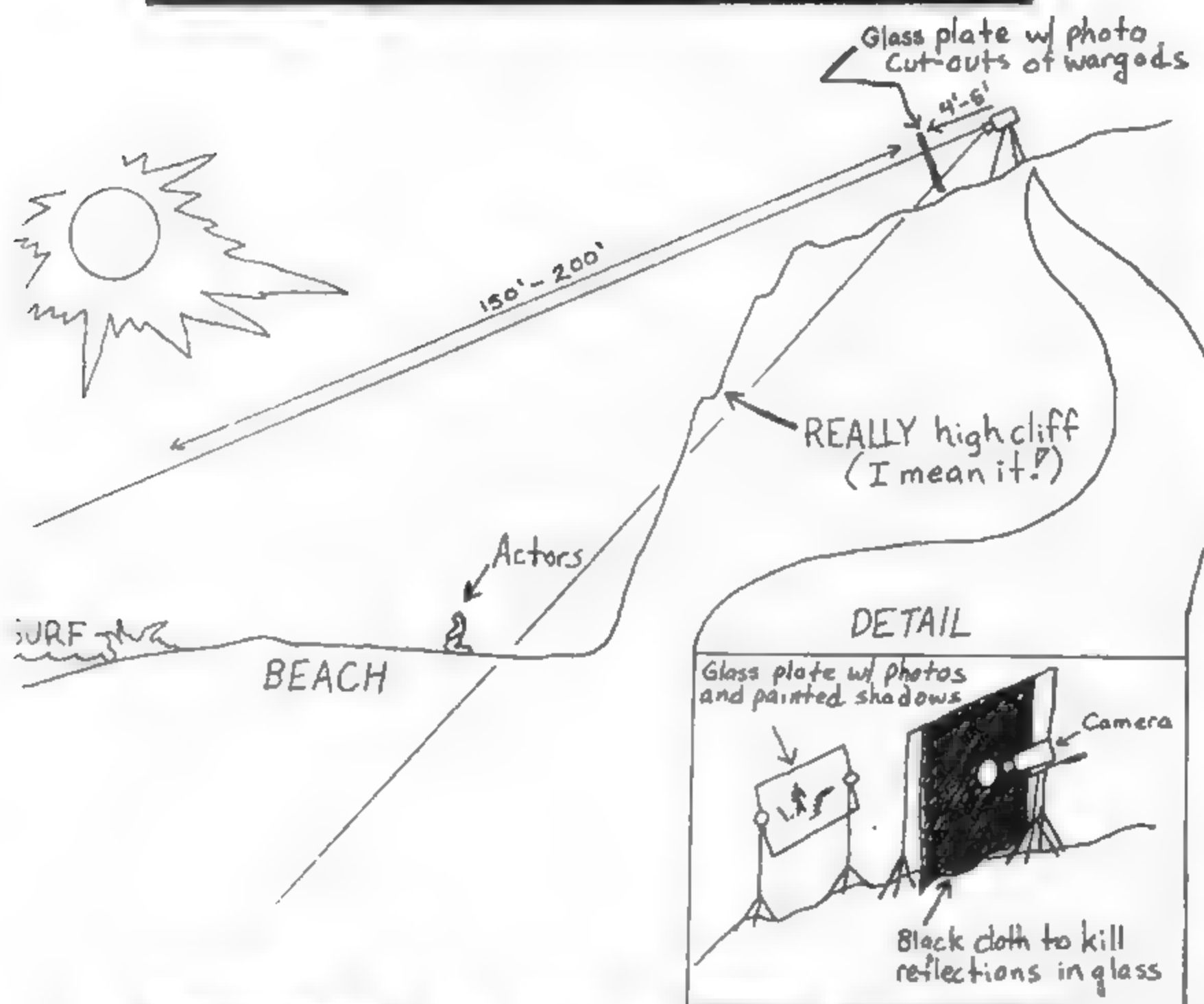
"Perspective" is the apparent size of an object in relation to the other objects at different distances. Thus, the image of a man holding a beer out toward the camera could be presenting with the beer can exactly at the same height as the man's head—but moving the camera closer and switching to a wide-angle lens, we could create the image so that

the beer can was several times as large as the man's head. Changing the perspective cannot be accomplished without changing the relative distances between the camera and parts of the subject.

A wide angle lens has a much greater DOF than a normal or telephoto lens, and is often used for that reason alone. The relative size of foreground to background objects can be greatly exaggerated by a combination of camera placement and choice of lens. Suppose we have a person in the foreground and a mountain in the background, and we have just filmed them with a normal lens. In this shot, the foreground figure stands just the height of the full frame of picture. If we switch over to a wide-angle lens, and move the camera closer to the foreground figure so that he fills the frame height again, the net result of this "forced perspective" shot will be that he will appear twice his size in relation to the mountain as shot with the normal lens—making him appear to be a giant. In relation to this, the larger DOF allowed by the wide-angle lens will keep both the foreground and background within acceptably sharp focus. ♦

—Kirk Smallman
from his book "Creative Filmmaking"

TO THE OBSERVER...



TO THE CAMERA...



Illustration by Wyatt Weed

Chen and Lao mourn near the fallen Nio Titan as Meta Spartan looks on...

standing in the same room and both actually life sized.

WW: This is another shot that suffered due to the video transfer.

LC: Yeah. It looked beautiful projected, it was incredible. With most of

that projected footage, you thought you were watching 35mm, but once we got it on video, I couldn't believe it was so dark; it's a night-and-day difference. I remember getting the footage back in the castle scenes and I was really happy with it because it had that really moody film look. It

was dark, but it was mostly moody and everything was there. And then, all of a sudden, put it on video and it's all gone. Everything gets turned black.

Is there a difference in lighting a miniature set and a full sized one?

Minatures & Matter...

“The thing that’s so different about KUNG FU RASCALS is that every frame in every shot got treated with the same amount of respect that a 35mm film would get.”—WYATT WEED

SW: Definitely. People think you just duplicate the exact same set-up, but you don’t—the area you’re lighting becomes a lot smaller. In order to duplicate the same kinda size, you need more lights to scrape the surfaces of certain shots or a certain wave of light that turns out when it’s lit that you wouldn’t be able to get with just one light. Since we were working with a 1/3 scale set, that surface becomes three times smaller.

WW: That’s the whole physics of scaling something down to nothing: making the light scale down, drape and deflect in the same way. We actually used video-assist on that too.

SW: But, primarily for puppeteering because I was back doing the head and upper body. We had a guy on the bottom doing both arms, two guys on each side doing the two arms and another person behind it, where I am, doing the main shaking of the butt. We coordinated on moving from side to side. And there were monofilaments here coming up behind the dress to move each of her arms. The feet were glued down to the floor so they wouldn’t move while we worked the rest of the body.

one early fight scene where two ninjas seem to sprout right out of the ground. . .

SW: [Gales of laughter] You don’t mean the shot where after Reepo yells, “Ninja!” do you? It’s a shot of Chen, turning around and they explode out of the ground? [At this point Wyatt laughs, knowing that the effect had

LC: Well, the sound effect that we put on top of it was totally ludicrous—a huge cannon explosion, coupled with a foley of leaves being tossed.

So, it’s a complete cheat?

SW: Complete, absolute cheat. But “cheating” was my middle name on *Kung Fu Rascals*.

LC: [Laughing] And his last!

WW: Which is exactly the kind of thing that happens on a lot of 35mm productions but rarely happens with Super 8 films—but did happen on *Kung Fu Rascals*—which just goes back to how specific Steve’s vision was. It helps to know how you want a shot like this and how you want these people to “explode out of the ground.” It’s easy to tell two guys, “Okay, you’re gonna throw the leaves, and stand up on

cue.” But, to give the impression of, “No, no, no! You guys are not the undead. You’re ninjas! You’re gonna go ‘PSZHTTT!’ up outta the ground.” Of course, it also helped to have these maniacs out there playing the ninjas who’ve seen twenty or thirty kung fu films and know exactly what Steve was talking about. I think the reason that sold me on working for Steve to begin with was when I saw some of his first Super 8 short films I kept asking my friend, “This is Super 8?” People have a tendency to take that little tiny Super 8 camera and treat it



(ABOVE and LEFT) Unable to find real locations that fit the film’s fantasy universe, models were used for most building exteriors. Here, a balsa wood and paper model is blended into the bushy hillside with strategically positioned moss.



completely fooled me.] Believe it or not, that was a last minute ad-lib to the scene. I stood there with the camera directly in front of me with two guys on either side with big bags of leaves and dirt. The ninjas were kinda kneeling down below the camera, so we timed it so that as soon as I turned, they threw all the shit up in front of the lens and just stepped up through it as it fell. So, it gave the illusion that you were actually seeing the ninjas coming out of the ground, but you’re not. You don’t even see the ground. There might’ve also been a slight zoom out as they jumped.

BURROWING NINJAS AND SUPER FROGS

There are a couple other effects that are less impressive, but really set the mood of the film—filling up the background. There’s

in a real tiny way. Steve didn't do that. The thing that's so different about *Kung Fu Rascals* is that every frame in every shot got treated with the same amount of respect that a 35mm film would get. I mean, even the little corners of the sets were lit, everything. Even if through that little tiny viewfinder you couldn't see the back corner, we still put dirt and cobwebs and creatures there just to make sure.

In several scenes, we saw the Bamboo Man's frog warriors in action. To make them seem that they moved very quickly, you added a blurring or streaking effect that trailed after them—how was that done?

SW: That was a simple filter effect. I looked through a book of filters for regular 35mm still cameras and found this one lens called "Super Speed." It's basically a split lens that creates a streaking effect to one side of the

(RIGHT) Wang fore-shadows both the War Gods' arrival and giant size with this "destroyed castle" model. Set against the ocean, the shot is devoid of any hints of the model's actual scale—notice, however, the carefully positioned sword handle protruding from the ruins, which suggests that something much larger must have attacked it.



The Bamboo Man's castle: (ABOVE) as a miniature surrounded by a moss and twig forest, which was seamlessly edited into an early chase scene; and **(ABOVE RIGHT)** as a matte painting that allowed a greater sense of distance and scale. **(RIGHT)** The castle model actually stood only about 10 inches high.

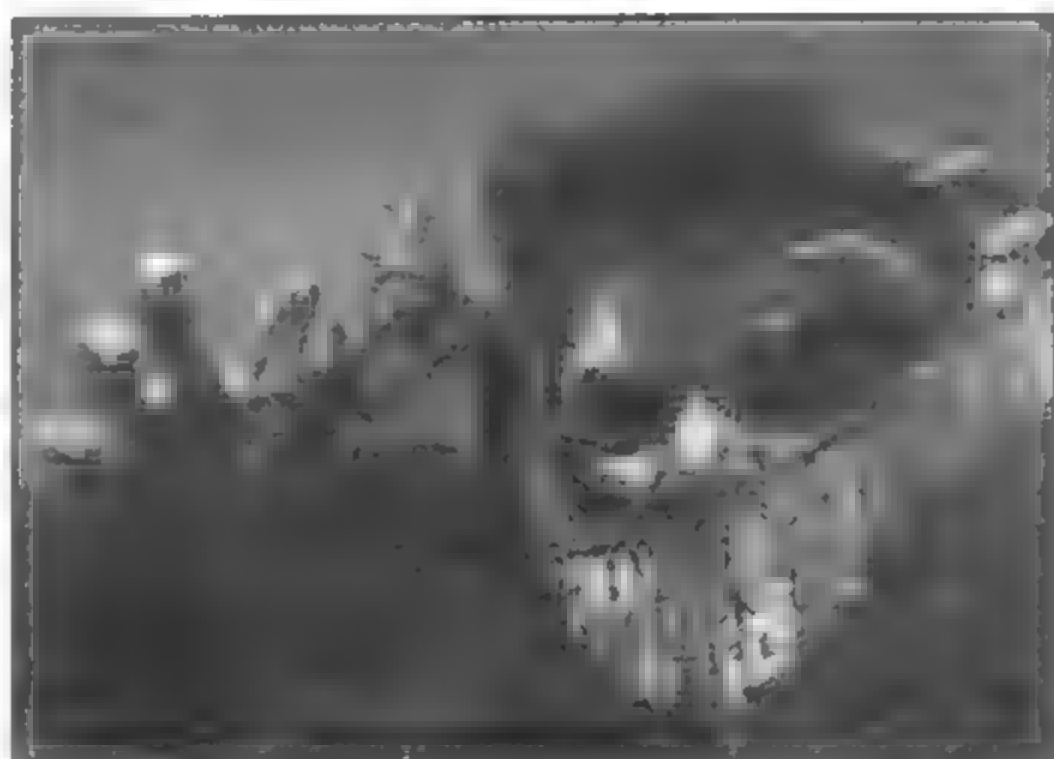


image. So, I ordered this thing, which only cost me \$10, and tried it on my Super 8 camera. I found that the best way to get the streaking effect was to zoom it all the way in. So, I focused in and as the frogs moved, I tried to keep the blur line consistent to the middle of their bodies. We just did a bunch of shots and, luckily, it worked. So it was

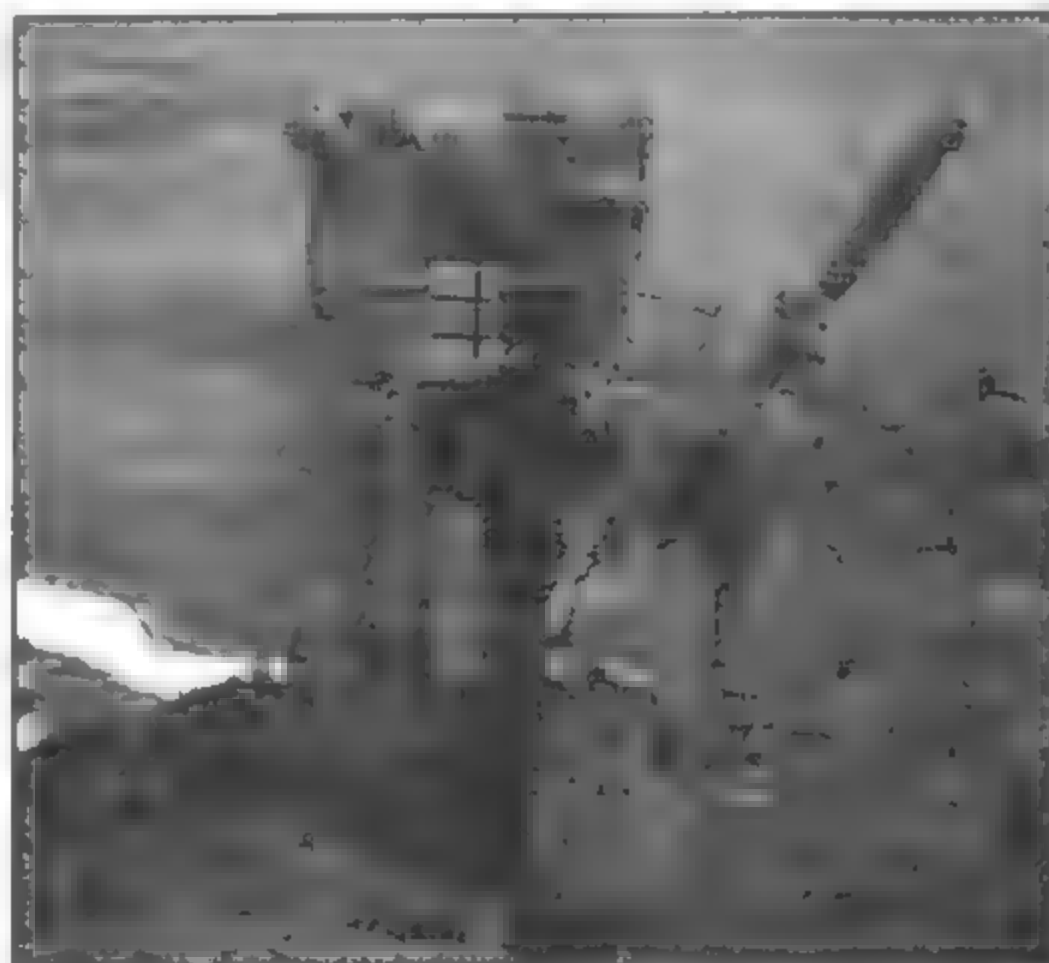
really a simple effect that just seemed like more than it was.

LC: Toss a jet airplane sound from hell on top of it and you've got Speedy Frog!

WW: If we had it to do over again, I would want to try undercranking the frogs. 'Cause if you look at the footage real closely, he's just sorta [Mimes a mellow, trottin' frog—everyone laughs].

The frogs could also jump 20 feet straight up.

SW: That was all wires. Our stunt coordinator, Brian "Unintelligible Girly-Man" Simson, rigged this little pulley, ran the wires and attached it to a body harness, which we put on under the frog costume. I believe we used a 500 pound test wire, which was very thin. It snapped a couple of times because it was so thin, but anything thicker than that we would've seen on film. Even though a person only weighs 150-200 pounds, when you





(ABOVE) The Bamboo Man from *Ka Pow*. (ABOVE LEFT) A fight between he and Chen Chow Mein (Wang) was planned but later scrapped. (BELOW) Director of photography Mike Bastings was inexperienced with Super 8, but quickly caught on under Wang's instruction. Here, he catches the Bamboo Man in his moody throne room.



got them going up and going down, their momentum increases the weight so we were on the edge of the 500 pound limit. Fortunately, no one was hurt. We later used the same kind of wire rig for the scene where my character, Chen, climbs up a vertical wall. Again we used the 500 pound test wire, but it didn't break—which was lucky for me because it was about a fifty foot drop straight down.

PRIMITIVE LETTERBOX TECHNIQUES

Did you know you were going to use the widescreen format from the very beginning?
SW: Oh, yes. That was completely planned because one thing I didn't want was for people to judge *Kung Fu Rascals* on the basis that it was a Super 8 film. If I could fool them, then I would. And not only that, I have a soft spot in my heart for the letterbox format. It's just a way movies should be seen—you can do nicer shots composition-wise and you have a lot more freedom. So everything was done with the letterbox format in mind. Again, it was done in camera. We had these two little arrows in the viewfinder—that were actually part of the light meter—which worked as guides for our letterbox, marking our headroom. So we just had to train ourselves to look through and to compensate for that. It



“Put [KFR’s 43,000 budget] in the proper perspective. Feature films regularly spend between 100,000 and 500,000 on catering.”—LES CLAYPOOL

was all done by eye and the frame was later masked off with a video effect to create the final letterbox. To make sure that the action was staying within the boundaries of frame we transferred our dailies by projecting it on the wall and videotaping it. Then, we’d watch the footage again on TV—

with the screen marked off with duct tape. We were very lucky that most of the stuff we shot actually came out really good. Mike Bastings, our DP, had only shot two Super 8 shorts before he did *Kung Fu Rascals*. I took him out on a trial run one day, just to see how he worked, and ended up using him for the entire movie. He did an incredible job for a guy who just decided, “Well, I don’t have much experience, but I love this stuff. I’m gonna take this and run.”

THE BOTTOM LINE: MONEY

What is the final effects shot count?

WW: There’s something like 140 or 145 effects shots in the film.

But there’s only twenty of them in the film up until the war gods sequence, and the final 120 come in after that. If it was a live-action, real-time shot with a war god, I didn’t count it. If it was something that had to be rehearsed at a different speed, shot high speed and compensated for exposure-wise, I counted that. So sometimes you’ll see a war god tumbling onto the sand in slow motion and it may not seem like an effects shot. But if it required redressing the beach and



Will the bumbling Rascals return for another adventure? Who knows, but hopefully the mass-merchandising cash-in will go well! Look for your Reepo, Chen Chow Mein and Lao Zee action figures this Christmas!



pulling the seaweed out and brushing down the sand and rehearsing an actor at a different speed, then taking the exposure and compensating for the different speed, it was an effects shot

Do you have any idea what the final budget was?

SW: Well, everything, including the party and the screening costs, came out to roughly about \$43,000. A lot of people think that’s a lot of money to spend on a Super 8 feature, but

they just don’t have any idea what it took to get this thing made—how little money was actually spent considering what I got. You have to also consider all the minutes of film that ended up on the cutting room floor and other effects shots that we didn’t end up using because certain scenes were later cut.

LC: But put this in the proper perspective. Feature films regularly spend between \$100,000 and \$500,000 on catering.

WW: Okay, love this one.

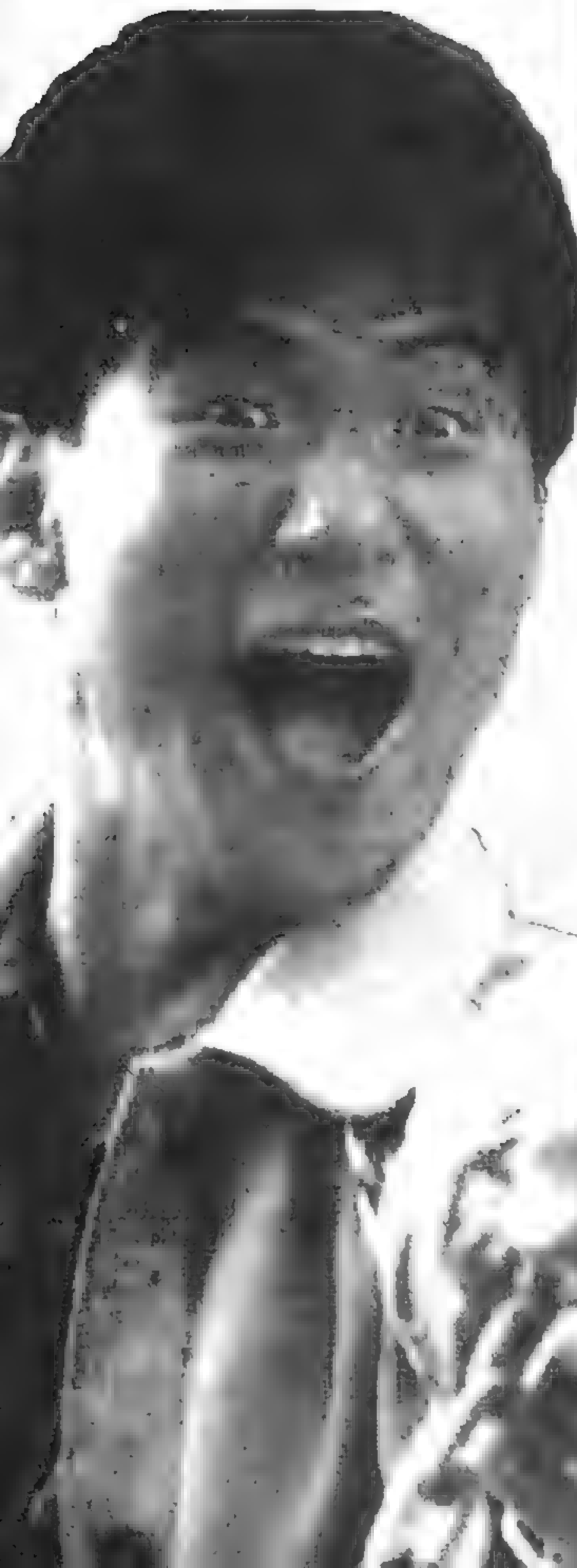
Terminator 2’s craft service budget was somewhere in that \$350,000 to \$500,000 range. We’re not even talking catering, we’re talking craft service—Snickers and M&Ms and chips. The junk food you put out on a table for the crew! So I’ve worked on a feature with an entire budget that was less than what *T2’s* craft service budget was.

SW: Yeah, my catering and craft service budget, I believe, came out to be maybe like \$2,500. Which really is the thing that cost me the most, besides the film and developing. ‘Cause you know

everybody was working for free so the least I could do was feed ‘em. Even though it wasn’t great food, it was food

LC: And that’s actually well spent money, considering what you’re getting for just feeding people. Essentially, you’re getting a movie!

Wang is currently shooting an instructional video about monster-suit making, to be released next year. (HYG)



JOHN

WOO SPAGHETTI EASTERNS

Breathtakingly violent, Hong Kong Cinema director JOHN WOO's films are breaking loose in the States with a vengeance.

By Lisa Feerick

A GANGSTER CARRYING OUT A VENDETTA walks into a swanky restaurant and blows away a dinner party. When he empties his clip, he simply reaches for another fresh, loaded automatic he has cleverly planted in the potted plants lining his path of retreat. The guy gets away clean, right? Nah.

This time he gets his kneecaps shattered by one of his half-dead victims and we get to see his pain in living color as he drags his dead leg behind him in order to finish off his uppity target.

Three longtime buddies and wannabe smugglers arrive in Saigon some time in the late Sixties. As they sit marveling at the sights from their taxi cab, they spot a lone guy on a motorcycle headed straight for a military compound. Still thinking they're in

Jackie Cheung and his 9mm equalizer.

Kansas, they're stunned when their driver jumps from the car and advises them to do the same. The dude on the bike has V.C. written all over him and as a result the military guys fire on him. The bike goes into a sideways slide and impacts with our pals' cab sending it and all their contraband into explosive oblivion.

You're watching two guys in a stylized church. One cop, one killer. They're waiting for the bad guys who are after the killer. They've got a woman with them who needs protection. When the army of avenging hitmen finally arrives, the place just explodes in automatic discharges.

Small armies are less equipped than these two forces facing off in God's house. The windows shatter, dead men are falling out of the rafters, the altar is demolished. Through it all the votive candles still burn. The two friends take hit after hit and mow down all the bad guys save one: the big boss who takes the woman hostage.

Now if you were watching a scene even remotely similar to the above sequences in say, a Richard Donner or Walter Hill film, you'd be out of the movie already, saying to yourself, "Oh C'mon!" and waiting impatiently for the grand pyrotechnic display to subside so you could get back to the story . . . just to discover that there ain't no story, just a catalog of bigger and better stunts and exploding buildings.

Right then, you're wondering what else you could have done with the \$7.50 you plunked down for this anemic excuse of an action film.

If you're a vigilant action fan, you've probably already had some exposure to the fabulous cornucopia of Hong Kong cinema. You probably caught *A Chinese Ghost Story* and the Tsui Hark and Jackie Chan segments of *The Incredibly Strange Film Show*. You may have even heard of *The Killer*. But, I'm willing to bet that you could put some serious information about director John Woo to very good use.

We're not talking about Dennis Woo or Tom Vu, the guys you see on late night TV with the leering grins and



An effects man's dream: The ultra-suave John Woo is said to have a fetish for bullet hits.

babe on each arm, singing the praises of real estate ownership as an aphrodisiac. (And if you just send him some money, you too can know the secret . . .) No, the man we're talking about is John Woo, who, along with Tsui Hark, has succeeded in reminding international audiences of two important cinematic principles.

The first being that the best action scenes are character based and not simply founded in bigger and better stunts. The second crucial lesson he demonstrates is that the dynamics of the action in a film are not the whole story; that it is essentially unsatisfying to have characters spending

the duration of a film just reacting to external events. Woo's films feature strong internal logic, so despite the wildly unrealistic scenarios that develop, the willing suspension of disbelief is made easier by the very believable, human emotions that serve as catalyst to these events.

The breakaway films that established Woo as a masterful action director were the two *Gangland* sagas: *A Better Tomorrow* (1986) and *A Better Tomorrow II* (1987), both starring Chow Yun Fat, Ti Lung and Leslie Cheung. These Tsui Hark produced films also are largely responsible for the new heights of violence we now see in just about every Hong Kong action film.

Loosely, the two films chronicle the story of two friends working in the counterfeiting trade and what lengths they go to in the name of friendship. They're incredibly violent, with director Woo's camera giving us an unflinching view of the grim results of flashy gunplay. Exit wounds abound and this viewer has never seen a screen hero take more abuse (and live) than does Chow Yun Fat's character Mark in *ABT I*.

The action is played out in an epic fashion, making comparisons to Sergio Leone and Sam Peckinpah a frequent occurrence. Obviously, Woo has watched a lot of westerns. Even the character's garb apes westerns. They all wear these incredibly stylish top coats with vents up the back that evoke dusters. If that weren't enough, there is a major subplot involving the Ti Lung character, Ho, and his brother

Kit who is a young cop. He has broken his father's heart by pursuing a career in the underworld and Kit cannot forgive him for being the inadvertent cause of their father's death. The central conflict in the story features both brothers working on nailing a crime boss, but from opposite sides.

Woo's good friend, Tsui Hark, directed a second sequel in this series that also deserves mention since it completes the cycle. *A Better Tomorrow III*, while radically different in style, is an emotional prequel that successfully reveals vital information about Mark and his first dealings with underworld crime. Woo has been quoted as saying that his relationship with Hark served as the inspiration for the first two films. In many ways, part *III* is the best of the group, but it's most interesting as a counterpoint to the first two Woo efforts. Hark's take on friendship is equally romanticized and his effort to capture the pain of people trying to survive in the corrupt environment of Saigon just before the fall, makes *ABT III* an important companion piece to another Woo stunner, *Bullet in the Head*.

The earliest available example of Woo as an action director is *Heroes Shed No Tears* (1983, originally titled *Sunset Warrior*). The story follows a group of mercenaries hired to go up against the heroin trade in return for passports back to Hong Kong. What I loved about this film was the inclusion of a child character who holds his own against evil army guys and the *Moby Dick* plot device whereby one thwarted army official wastes everyone and everything in sight in order to avenge himself.

This movie is a prime example of what they can get away with in Hong Kong and we cannot here in the USA. There's a scene where the little kid is held hostage and the bad guys hold a big gun to his temple. Later, the boy runs off on his own through armed resistance to rescue his daddy, who's had his eyelids sewn open during torture. Our resourceful kid bites the knots off the stitches and helps his dad to safety while being shot at by an entire regiment.

When have you ever seen anything even remotely that intense in an American film? Never. You can't put a kid in peril here! Not that I'm suggesting it's a cool thing to regularly show images of little rugrats with guns pointed at their heads, but my point is that it served the plot in this film, so the director did it. Just like that—not worrying about what Jack Valenti or Movie Mom on the Home Show would say, they just fucking did it. Don't you wish Richard Donner or Walter Hill could do that?

Another Gangland film, *Just Heroes* (1988) features one of my favorite action stars, Danny Lee (also known as Lee Sao Yin). He's usually cast in cop roles and is something of a kinder, gentler, Chinese version of Clint Eastwood. He plays it on the other side of the law here as Tu, a contender to the throne of his murdered mob boss. The plot hinges on the killing being an inside job and the revelation of the traitor.

The good brother/bad brother theme comes up here with a twist. There's Lee as the good criminal up against his mob-brother Tai, the traitor, as well as the introduction of a gangster-gone-straight pal of Tu's who is drawn into the conspiracy out of loyalty to his dead boss.

One fun thing about this movie is the inclusion of a couple of scenes spoofing the gangland ethics espoused in *A Better Tomorrow*, as well as a bit mimicking one of its most famous and frequently shown clips: the scene in which Chow Yun Fat walks down a hallway on his way to a hit with a girl in his arms—casually stashing guns in the potted plants along the way for his retreat as he kisses and caresses her. Boy, what an in-joke.

Woo's most internationally known film is *The Killer* (1989) and was my first exposure to John Woo as a director and to Chow Yun Fat and Danny Lee as actors. After watching dozens of their other films, I can say this one holds up as the best piece of work for everyone. Not only are the roles beautifully played, but there's a high style that clings to and defines each of them in this film.

Danny Lee is the obsessive cop who's hunting down a hit man and in the course of the chase learns that he has more in common with his prey, Jeff (Chow Yun Fat), than with the men he works for. The catalyst for the action is the doublecrossing of Jeff on what was to be his final hit, but the real story is the developing respect and eventual friendship between the cop and the killer.

The film is an incredibly romanticized statement on the significance of male friendship, the underlying brotherhood that exists between all men of honor. Superb in a supporting role as Jeff's dearest friend is, Chu Kong, an

Woo Filmography

by Damon Foster

Young Dragon (1973)
The Dragon Tamer (1974)
Princess Chang Ping (1975)
Hand Of Death (1975)
Money Crazy (1977)
Follow The Star (1977)
Last Hurrah For Chivalry (1978)
From Rags To Riches (1979)
To Hell With The Devil (1981)
Laughing Times (1981)
Plain Jane To The Rescue (1982)
Sunset Warrior (1983)
The Time You Need A Friend (1984)
Run Tiger Run (1985)
Heroes Shed No Tears (1986)
A Better Tomorrow (1986)
A Better Tomorrow Part 2 (1987)
The Killer (1989)
Just Heroes (1989)
Bullet In The Head (1990)
Once A Thief (1991)
Hard Boiled (1992)

actor of Academy Award style depth.

The only female character in the film, Jenny (Sally Yeh) is less of a person and more of a symbol in what I perceive to be a pattern in John Woo films. Far from marginalizing her, he sets her up as the physical embodiment of the killer's guilt and the reminder of the part of himself he has turned his back on. In protecting her, he is not so much helping a defenseless woman as he is hanging onto his own humanity and the side of himself that can love and be loyal. When she is taken hostage at the end of the film, it sets up a fundamental confrontation between the strength of brutality and the redeeming power of love. Terribly Wagnerian!

Bullet In The Head (1990) is perhaps Woo's most ambitious film to date and is not for the squeamish. His riff on the Tiananmen Square massacre, the film uses Viet Nam as a metaphoric device, successfully reintroducing the most horrific truths about both realities without lapsing into cliché. The story follows three boyhood friends from a Hong Kong 'hood. Early on we see almost loving depictions of their gang activities with the Neil Diamond penned tune "I'm A Believer" running on the soundtrack. After an

**Chow Yun Fat:
Hong Kong's
answer to Cary
Grant, but with a
body count.**

accidental killing (One of our heroes bashes another gang leader just a little too hard with a bottle. Some accident!), the three friends vow to stand by each other and take it on the lam.

Paul (Waise Lee), a would be gangster, engineers their escape to Viet Nam (Yup, you read that right—escape from Hong Kong to Viet Nam.) where they plan to become rich by smuggling medical supplies to the North. On their first day in Saigon, their goods get blown up during a civil disturbance, and they almost get shot for being VC. Tony Wong plays Ben, the idealistic young married guy who chucks it all for his friends and teen idol/pop star Jacky Cheung turns in a *tour de force* performance as the doomed Frank, who was already three steps over the edge before the film begins.

The film's proportions are mythic, with each new obstacle exponentially worse than the previous challenge. It's impossible to impart all that this film contains without being flip. If you went to Hell with two of your best friends and did your best to survive and get home, you'd come close to what these characters go through.

Outside the circle of friends, we are introduced to two vital supporting characters: Luke (Yam Tak Wah) the suave Eurasian assassin and Sally the stranded cabaret singer from Hong Kong. Sally is another one of those wonderful symbolic women: lured to Saigon by a crime boss with the promise of a job and once there forcibly addicted to heroin and pressed into service as a prostitute. Her passport confiscated, she hopes to be able to return home one day. Her loss of innocence mirrors that of the three men and her presence reminds them of the home they left behind. When she dies, so does their hope of escape. At this point in the film, the cement of friendship begins to crumble and each man faces what comes without that common goal of getting home and back to normal.

While the level of violence is astonishing, the depth of emotion presented is the most overwhelming aspect of the film. I did not go into this flick prepared to leave with an aching heart, but that's what you get. Over two hours of watching the most exquisite pain people can go through and still retain their humanity is enough to choke up even a Neanderthal.

If after all that, you need another hit, try *Once a Thief* (1991). While it's basically a comedy, there's plenty of action and shoot-outs to satisfy even the most die-hard action fiend. Starring Chow Yun Fat, Cherie Chung, Leslie Cheung and Chu Kong (Do we detect any patterns here?) it tells the story of an art thieving trio who've been together since childhood and the tug of war for their allegiance by their two "dads."

One is a vicious crook who took them



BULLET IN THE HEAD:
If you went to Hell with two of your best friends and did your best to survive and get home, you'd come close to what these characters go through.

in as waifs and taught them fundamental robbery skills. The other, Chu Kong, is the kindly beat cop-become-inspector who tries at every turn to get them to turn honest. The not-so-unique Chinese concept of filial piety comes into play quite a bit here as we see the two boys, now men, struggle with the choices they made.

As is typical in these films, Woo balances the high bullet index with statements about the importance of treating your woman well and the notion that loyalty and obedience can only be achieved through love—and not whipped into a child. The central emotional struggle belongs to Chow Yun Fat's character who cannot commit himself to Cherie Chung and loses her as a result.

A sweet and amusing overall, the film, according to Woo, was originally intended to have a much more tragic ending. Perhaps he decided to spare us a bit after the hellish *Bullet in the Head*.

John Woo's very latest film, *Hard Boiled* was shown here in Los Angeles at the AFM (American Film Market), meeting to an enthusiastic crowd of international buyers. The screening went like his: a few minutes into the film, there's a signature, no holds barred gunfight/action scene. A few moments into the scene, a buyer up front yells out loud, "HOW MUCH!!!" (Meaning, how much does the production company want for the American distribution rights. Translation: This one's gonna make tons o' money.)

Hard Boiled (again) stars Chow Yun Fat and Tony Wong (Ben from *Bullet in the Head*) as two cops after the same gang of thugs for very different purposes. Woo appears in a cameo role as Chow's confidante bartender. The preliminary action, while totally intense and over the top, is a set up for a *Die Hard*-like scenario that has the two cops facing off against the mob boss in a hospital owned by the gangster. An armory's worth of weapons are hidden behind the morgue and full scale confrontations explode all over the joint including the maternity ward!

Forget that little thing I said about the kid in jeopardy in *Heroes Shed No Tears*. This movie takes the cake big time as thirty or forty cutie-pie infants get stuck in the crossfire. And, our hero Chow Yun Fat gets to play out one gunfight with a baby in his arms. I can only imagine the cardiac arrests this would cause over at the MPAA.

The film marks a return to the theme of underlying bonds between men fighting for the same cause and lots of intense male friendship—and I'm sure the more homophobic members of future audiences will be squirming. We also get a comedic look at a male-female relationship stalled at the prospect of commitment to balance the heavy lead content.

What sets Woo apart from his American colleagues is this: his films are not merely an excuse for a senseless series of macho hip talk between two basically unsavory guys who then find themselves set on an action rollercoaster of special effects the filmmaker hope to pass off for a plot. (See *Lethal Weapon 3*.) Instead, Woo's sensibility is that of a consummate Romanticist. His characters have resonant moral codes and not just agendas for destruction. One of his most "out there," criminals, Mad Dog from *Hard Boiled*, refuses to fire in a room of innocents. Woo's good guys—and even some of the bad guys—are surprisingly moral.

All of this makes for a film not exclusively aimed at Armageddon-hungry males. Woo milks the action for its full suspense potential and allows his male characters to display passion and commitment in the face of tremendous obstacles. From this writer's perspective, a John Woo film is like the man you left your last boyfriend for. Not satisfied with hollow *machismo*, the man with the heart is always going to come out ahead in the masculinity race. Woo manages to present men who do not deny their maleness while they embrace certain principles and emotions westerners more commonly associate with women.



HARD BOILED: Some critics have already invoked the H-Word (Homoerotic) to describe Woo's work, but clearly they are mistaken.

Some critics have already invoked the H-Word (Homoerotic) to describe Woo's work, but clearly they are mistaken. His films simply reveal that elsewhere in other filmmaking centers, there are directors who are not so creatively constipated as to be afraid of portraying male emotion. Intense loyalty and non-sexual love surely exists among men. It's nice that we can see it once in a while. John Woo should be grateful that he isn't NEA funded, huh?

An ardent anti-Communist who refuses to remain in Hong Kong once the Chinese take over in 1997, Woo's future in Hollywood appears to be quite bright. He is currently working on a project with Sam Raimi set to shoot in October, tentatively titled *Hard Target* and starring Jean Claude Van Damme.

Meanwhile, Woo's American counterpart, Walter Hill, is rolling with a remake of *The Killer* starring Richard Gere. While I doubt that Hill can recreate the bond between the cop and the killer in a manner acceptable to American audiences, it is reassuring to know that Woo's innovative style has prompted Hollywood to sit up and notice enough to try and imitate him. Indeed, the disco shoot-out in Hill's *Another 48 Hours* is extremely derivative of several scenes from Woo's resume.

All of Woo's films have been released on video in the United States and are easily

obtainable if you're located in an area with a big enough Chinese population to warrant video stores. Sometimes these stores are hard to find, but be brave, kids. Go out and look. If you live in a city with a Chinatown, call the Chinese Consumer Yellow Pages. Be aware that videos hide in the strangest places. One of my favorite rental places in L.A. is part of a shoe store.

You should also know that the name of a director is not all that helpful and that the English titles won't get you very far either. Your best bet is to ask for Chow Yun Fat films or come in armed with the Chinese titles. You may need to actually look at all the boxes in the store to find what you need, but in the course of your search, you're bound to find other great titles to watch.

Woo's films are distributed on tape under the labels of Pan Asia and Rainbow Audio Video. Located in San Francisco, they do not sell directly to the public but can be contacted by your local video store buyer at (415) 333-8888.

Another option is to pester your local revival or art house theater to book some of these films. *The Killer* has been out and about several times on this circuit, as has *Bullet in the Head*. *Hard Boiled* will be out there soon too. The quest is worth it and carries its own rewards. **FIVE**

THE KILLER: How many bullet hits can one man take? Woo is willing to find out.



AMERICA'S DEADLIEST HOME VIDEOS

MICK WYNHOFF and JACK PEREZ make a deadly shot-on-video feature starring Danny Bonaduce. AMERICA'S DEADLIEST HOME VIDEO is a sick road movie for the camcorder crowd that will get on your nerves.

Interview by Christian Gore



Danny documents his journey on video.

AMERICA'S FUNNIEST HOME VIDEOS is one of my favorite TV shows. I love to watch scenes of little kids falling down crying, hitting themselves or just basically getting hurt. I find it amusing that this is one of the highest rated shows on television. Another

personal fave is *Cops*—white trash folks were never so funny. The look of "shot-on-video" has become accepted by the public for these kinds of shows.

I'd like to say I had something to do with keeping Danny out of jail.

Enter producer/actor Mick Wynhoff and writer/director Jack Perez. This team decided that they were going to make a film—and nothing was

going to stop them. Not even their empty bank accounts. With a stack of credit cards this deadly duo produced a shot-on-video feature in two weeks and are now being courted by distributors to get the film released theatrically.

America's Deadliest Home Video follows the video diary of Doug played by *Partridge Family* bad boy Danny Bonaduce. This video tale is told through the camcorder itself. The camera literally becomes a character as Doug documents the exploits of a gang of murderers and convenience store crooks.

Before I ramble on about how cool this flick is, I'll let Mick and Jack tell the story themselves.

(NOTE: *ADHV* was shot with a High 8 Camcorder, which is the same camera used to shoot most of the footage we saw from *Operation Desert Storm*. Neat, huh? This interview was conducted over several FREE beers. I don't remember how many.)

How did you guys meet?

WYNHOFF - I had been working in independent films and doing bullshit work for Chris Webster (producer of *Hellraiser I and II*) and developing screenplays. A friend who works for the *Hollywood Reporter*, Todd Coleman, called me and said I should meet this guy, Jack Perez, who's this filmmaker from New York 'cuz he

thought we had similar ideas of how movies should be made—which is they should be made. Forty-five minutes after we met we decided we were going to make a movie.



Above: Doug (Danny Bonaduce) tries to convince his wife (played by real life spouse Gretchen) to have sex on camera.

Below: A sad symbol of our cathode ray tube culture, Doug makes a video diary.



Jack, what kind of films did you intend to direct?

PEREZ - I figured the easiest thing would be a Corman film or any kind of low-budget feature. Because my short film won awards (at NYU) I thought it would be easy, but what I found out was that the bureaucracy was just as deep at every level of filmmaking. So when I met Mick, it was a way to bypass that and just make something without any limitations and creative restrictions. When we decided to make a movie, we really had no idea what it was going to be, but I knew I wouldn't have to make a straight out slasher movie.

Why use video for a narrative feature film—it rarely works?

PEREZ - Traditionally, video is not used for anything dramatic. The only place they use

video is in soap operas and in the news. Everything else shot-on-video is always perceived as cheap. You see every blemish, even if you light it like film, it doesn't look like film. I wanted to stay away from that and use video—which is the equipment we had at the time—in a way that we didn't have to make any excuses for the look of it.

I didn't want to exploit his wife too much, after all she agreed to do a topless scene...

cinematic format, you are objective and now suddenly you are subjective. People are accustomed to, nowadays, talking to video cameras and making their own little videos.

WYNHOFF - In a lot of ways, it makes it more difficult for the audience to get into it because it makes them uncomfortable.

PEREZ - The first shot is of Danny emerging behind the camera and he takes the lens cap off. From the very get go, you had to get into it right away. The real inspiration was when Orson Welles tried to make *Heart of Darkness*—his whole concept was that it was going to be a subjective camera and the main character was to be the audiences' eyes. What I really like on TV today is *Cops* because they make no bones about production values. A guy with a camera next to a cop in the squad car, and he follows him to every



ABOVE: Danny slurps a toad.

BELOW: Melora Walters (as Gloria) and Mollena Williams (as Vezna) try to hide those unsightful blemishes that video shows so well.

The look of it had to be an important part of the movie.

WYNHOFF - We wanted to use video for video's sake.

Use its disadvantages as an advantage.

PEREZ - Exactly, the idea of the story is to be told through the view of a video camera. The camera becomes a character. You have to come up with ways of having whomever is handling the camera motivate the cuts. You couldn't just cut out, you had to have the camera impact into the ground or have somebody just turn it off. "Low battery" was a good way to get out of a tricky situation. Subjective camera, as far as I know, had only been used once and was used less successfully in *Lady and the Lake*. It was done in the 30s and the whole movie was told through the camera's point of view. I read somewhere that it was a failure because no one understood it. The basic plot of my movie is about the gang. First, it's Doug making a video log of himself. Then the camera is abducted, and the gang makes a documentary about their activities. So the movie is comprised of the gang's logs. You'll see the actual crimes in progress or the aftermath, where they discuss it. When someone looks and talks into the lens, as a character, you squirm because you've been following a standard





Melora Walters at target practice is overseen by director Perez. Looks like a .38 from here.

Is all of the dialogue scripted?

PEREZ - All of the dialogue is scripted. Well, with the exception of maybe the beach scene. It became a real challenge because—

WYNHOFF - We rehearsed everything and rescripted the dialogue.

Each scene must have been meticulously planned out—

PEREZ - That was the bitch. Traditionally the golden rule is that you only cut to show something of importance or something new, if you can do that in one take then you can keep the pace going and you don't have to cut. When we sat down and decided that this was the format, that everything was going to be shown through Danny's camera, then we were limited. I mean, to keep the integrity of the idea then we couldn't cut. Hitchcock did it in *Rope*, he tried to shoot it like a play, and it doesn't really work.

It looks like a filmed play.

PEREZ - Exactly, and it was a play. The actors in *ADHV* really went through hell because scenes would start in a car and then they would stop somewhere and they'd get out and then a gun wouldn't fire. The good thing about it was that Mick was raised in this town where we shot in Wisconsin and we had a lot of cooperation with the town's people—with all the gun fire and streets being closed down—stuff that would have been impossible to do in Hollywood.

crime situation that happens. It's very raw video.

I love the white trash on the show.

WYNHOFF - Yeah, it's always got some hookers.

PEREZ - Oh, it's great. It's also because they don't know what's going to happen, which adds a really nervous feeling. And, of course, because it's real you can't wait to see what's going to happen next. And some of the cool stuff is when they are chasing after somebody and the camera is going crazy. They don't care because the action is what's important.



Doug (Bonaduce), Vezna (Williams), Clint Dyer (producer Mick Mynhoff) and Gloria (Walters) ready themselves for a heist

The only place they use video is in soap operas and in the news. Everything else shot on video is always perceived as cheap. You see every blemish, even if you light it like film, it doesn't look like film.

Tell me about the scene where the car goes over the cliff.

PEREZ - We had one car so we had to design the shot in such a way that the "car drop" itself was independent of everything else because we couldn't reshoot it. We had Danny's part in the beginning and then dumping the car then focusing on Vezna holding the gun.

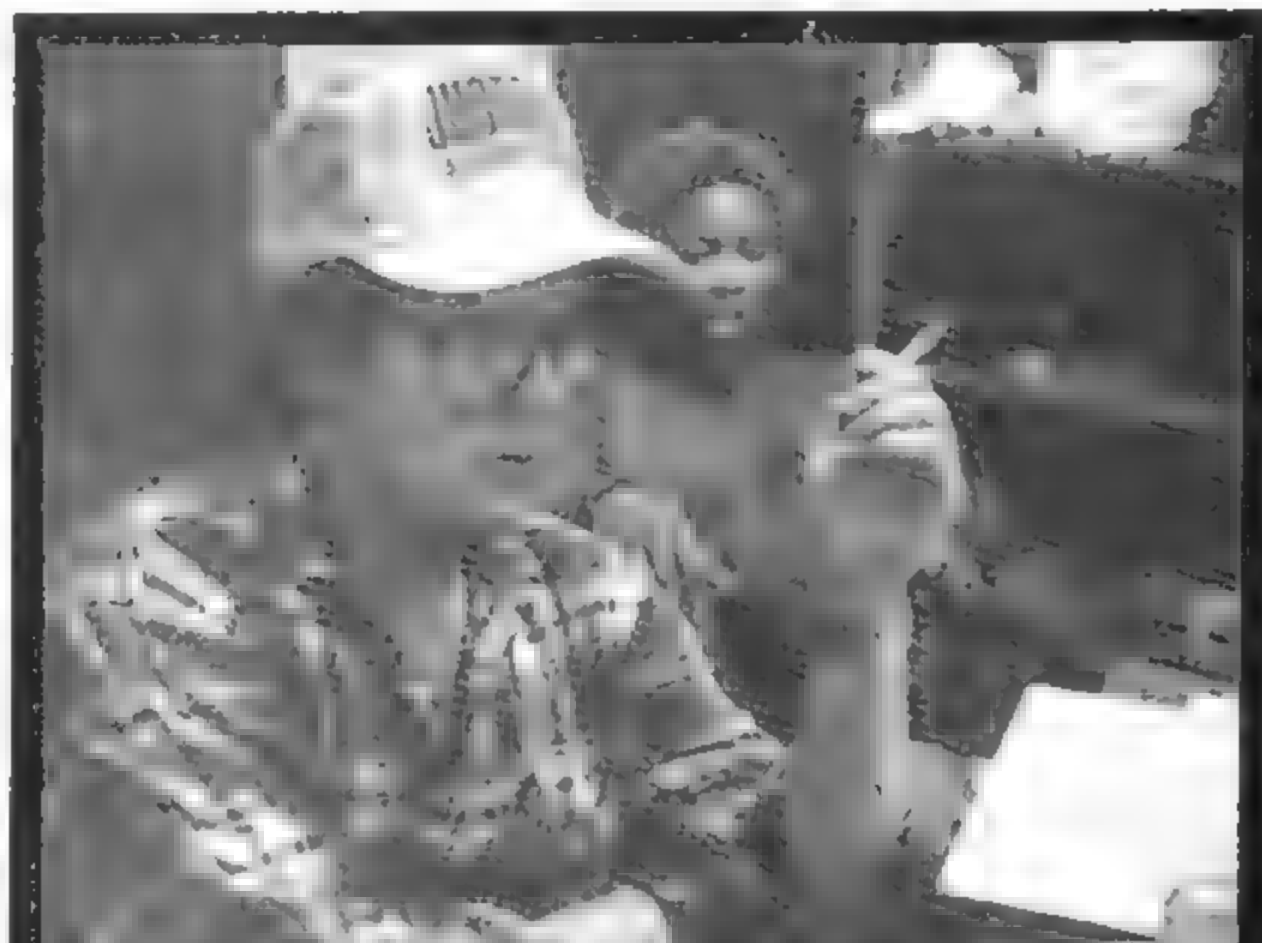
WYNHOFF - The car actually caused the scene to come into existence. It was my girlfriend's car. She discovered a break in her car frame and it would have cost a lot to get the frame replaced.

My favorite scene is where the girl is making the hamburgers and there's that sexual tension while all the background stuff is going on—there's all these levels of action.

PEREZ - We had a steadicam junior with a wide angle lens. The thing was I had to decide where that medium was between total chaos with the camera that's going to give someone a headache every five minutes and a little bit more stable shooting and it was justified by the fact that Danny's not supposed to be a novice with the camera.

It didn't really bother me a whole lot while I was watching it, but after I thought about how good it really looked.

PEREZ - The thing we're finding out is that people are responding to the fact that this is the concept and it's shot on video for a reason—because we planned it to be distributed on video. We've talked to some distributors who want absolutely nothing to do with it because it's



Director Jack Perez goes over the script. Actress/girlfriend Mollena Williams is pictured in the background.

video. It's *America's Deadliest Home Video* so it's shot on video for a reason!

WYNHOFF - The way we did it, it probably would have cost less to do it on film.

You should have lied and said it cost \$500,000 to make. Roger Corman always does that, he says his movies cost \$1 million to make, when they really cost about \$300,000 to make.

PEREZ - The most important thing is that we have to find a distributor who's hip to the idea.

How did you get Danny Bonaduce to star as the lead?

WYNHOFF - We decided we needed a name. Jack and I were batting around names and we mentioned Lief Garrett and David Cassidy when Danny Bonaduce's name came up. He was in the "Where are they now" files and everybody thought he was in jail. We got his number and called him up and told him we were doing this movie called *America's Deadliest Home Video* and I was straight with him, too. I said that it'd be shot on

video—extremely low budget. He just said, "Yes, I need to do a feature!" We got a call from his agent two days prior to shooting and she said, "Ha-ha, fuck you guys. Danny's not going to do it, he's going to jail." I'd been writing letters of appeal to the district attorney trying to keep him out of jail.

Somehow, they let him out.

I'd like to say I had

something to do with keeping Danny out of jail. When I first met him and saw how cute his wife was I said, "Can she act?" Danny said, "Why, do you want to put her in the movie?" I said, "Yeah, will she take her shirt off?"

Ha-ha, fuck you guys.
Danny's not going to
do it, he's going to jail.
—BONADUCE'S AGENT

WYNHOFF-The way we did it, it probably would have cost less to do it on film.

PEREZ - She had to do a topless scene, which we shot in Mick's folks' living room since his parents were catering the movie. His mom didn't know we were shooting this scene so we planned the shoot at a time she'd be setting up across the street, but now Mick tells me his mom's seen the movie and it's clear she knows what went on. Danny was a stickler about this



Producer Mick Wynhoff as Clint Dryer has fun with Gloria (Melora Walters) on video.

scene and I didn't want to exploit his wife too much, after all, she agreed to do a topless scene, so we had to position a table and a lamp in front of her for the scene so we could avoid showing the bottom half of her. She was on top of him and she was wearing underwear but what we ended up doing was having Danny shoot the scene himself, going up to the window and then zooming in on her. He kept cutting, though, and we wanted to get this over with because it was embarrassing for his wife and Danny's like, "No, no, we have to get this right. I keep seeing your panties so you gotta lose them." She did the scene five or six times and for someone who hadn't really done nude scenes before, she was a trooper. **[TVG]**

Mick Wynhoff and Jack Perez live in Hollywood and are still seeking a distributor for ADHV. If you see it on the shelf of your local video store, RENT IT. You won't be disappointed.

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By Paul T. Riddell



The suave JOHN BLOOM
and his alter ego
JOE BOB BRIGGS



THE AUTHOR OF FOUR books, host of a popular cable show and a syndicated film critic, Joe Bob Briggs is a one-man movie-viewing machine. Too bad he doesn't exist.

Mr. Briggs is really John Bloom, a native of Little Rock, Arkansas. After bouncing around as a sportswriter upon graduating college, he found himself as a film critic for the *Dallas Times Herald*, where he created the persona of "Joe Bob" to parody the self-importance of most syndicated film critics. The Briggs character became a smash hit when he first appeared in 1982 and caused a stink in the Dallas area, especially among editors at the *Herald's* competitor, the *Dallas Morning News*. Peppared with odes to the drive-in screen, Communist alerts and ratings based on the visibility of breasts,

beasts and blood, Joe Bob's writing wrangled sensitive readers. Sadly, his column disappeared in 1985 when local loud-mouth John Wiley Price accused Bloom's notorious "We Are the Weird" song parody of being racist and forced the *Herald* to cancel Briggs' lease on life. Bloom left shortly after, remarking, "This was the first time a paper apologized for a story that had absolutely no facts in it."

However, Joe Bob soon found himself resurrected by the publicity: his column appears in hundreds of mainstream and alternative papers nationwide. With the success of his continuing newsletter "We Are the Weird," Showtime's *Drive-In Theater* and his upcoming USA Network show *Joe Bob's America*, it seems nothing—short of a stake in the heart—can stop him now.

HOW TO FREAK HIM OUT

- (1) In your best Trekkle-nerd voice, compliment Briggs on his recent *We Are the Weird* piece praising both FT and FTVG. His number is (214) 892-8801.
- (2) If you happen to run into him on the street, point behind him and scream, "My God, it's John Wiley Price and HE'S GOT A GUN!"
(2A) Repeat ad nauseum.
- (3) Ask him if he ever took the time to watch Chris Gore's film *Ouch!*, which remained unclaimed on his *We Are the Weird* newsletter's "Free Stuff" list for several months.
- (4) Tell him that the woman who inspired "Ugly-On-A-Stick" is still searching for him, that she's gunning for a one-armed man. (He'll know what you mean!)

THE BRIDE OF
KILLER NERDS
TWIST OFFS

KNOW YOUR NERDS



SHAMELESS PLUG!

Man, and I thought I could escape this summer's glut of hopelessly over-hyped, over-stuffed, retread sequels by retreating to my VCR. Unfortunately this wasn't the case, making Riot Pictures' stillborn release BRIDE OF KILLER NERD the latest victim on the chopping block! Oh, the humanity!

by Rowdy Yates



The happy couple? Only if it makes money.

I'VE MET MY SHARE of utterly shameless self-promoters who would stop at nothing to get themselves in print. In fact, more than enough.

Nick Zed, when contacted for last issue's cover story on the New York underground, at first rebuffed our advances—but was sure to include a 8X10 glossy of himself with his rejection note.

Chris Gore . . . well, I'm sure any faithful reader knows about his activities.

But I'll have to confess, I've never received such a desperate plea as the photo reprinted to the left. Nearly as nauseating in its falsehood as a politician kissing a baby, this transparent, inexcusable tactic is a new low. As is the film it promotes, *Bride of Killer Nerd*.

As the fecal matter-laden stream of bad video continues to flow, some filmmakers have had the sense to cash in on the "intentional bad movie" craze propagated by some of our peer publications. What does it take to make a "bad" film? One would have to ask the creators of the hugely successful anti-comedy *Killer Nerd* and its new sequel.

While major studios like Paramount are obviously guilty of dumping marginal films on the market (making the likes of Charlie Band

a very rich man), everybody down the celluloid food chain wants to get in on the act; with the resulting films of corresponding quality. Troma still seems to have the corner on aggressively bad movies (*Chopper Chicks From Zombietown* was a personal non-fave), but there have been various upstart producers who realize that a full color box with wild artwork and a suggestive title will sell even the least imaginative, barely watchable film—translating into some quick profit, provided the production budget is low enough.

Such was the case with Mark Bosko and Wayne Harold's original release, *Killer Nerd*. Not long after I turned our review copy into a collection of *Ren & Stimpy* cartoons, I was informed that Bosko & Harold had managed, by way of a shrewd distributor, to wedge thousands of these things onto video rental racks across the country. Needless to say, I was shocked. In these recession-

ary times, how could the American public be so gullible as to waste their money on this kind of dreck? (And if it was simply a mind-numbing experience they were after, why hadn't they just gone for a much cheaper and less harmful \$10 vial of crack? Or maybe a hour of FREE network television?)

Could *Nerd's* success have been helped along by the MTV publicity they received by way of star (and one-time channel semi-regular) Toby Radloff? Probably not. Though, like Larry Bud Melman, Radloff is capable of provoking a chuckle on occasion simply for "being," he is ultimately grating, predictable and unwatchable. And also like Melman, I'd have to admit to laughing AT him and not with him—as I was with the rest of *Bride*.

Whatever the reason, the responsables are back with *Bride of Killer Nerd*—an obvious cash-in on an obvious cash-in. Shameless? Sure, but who can blame them for following the examples set by Hollywood? *Batman Returns*? *Lethal Weapon 3*? *Alien 3*? What's worse, a big expensive rehash or a really cheap one?

You tell me. **FTVG**

Rowdy Yates was reinstated as a FTVG contributor only after we received so much hate mail regarding his writing that it seemed like a fun way to annoy people.

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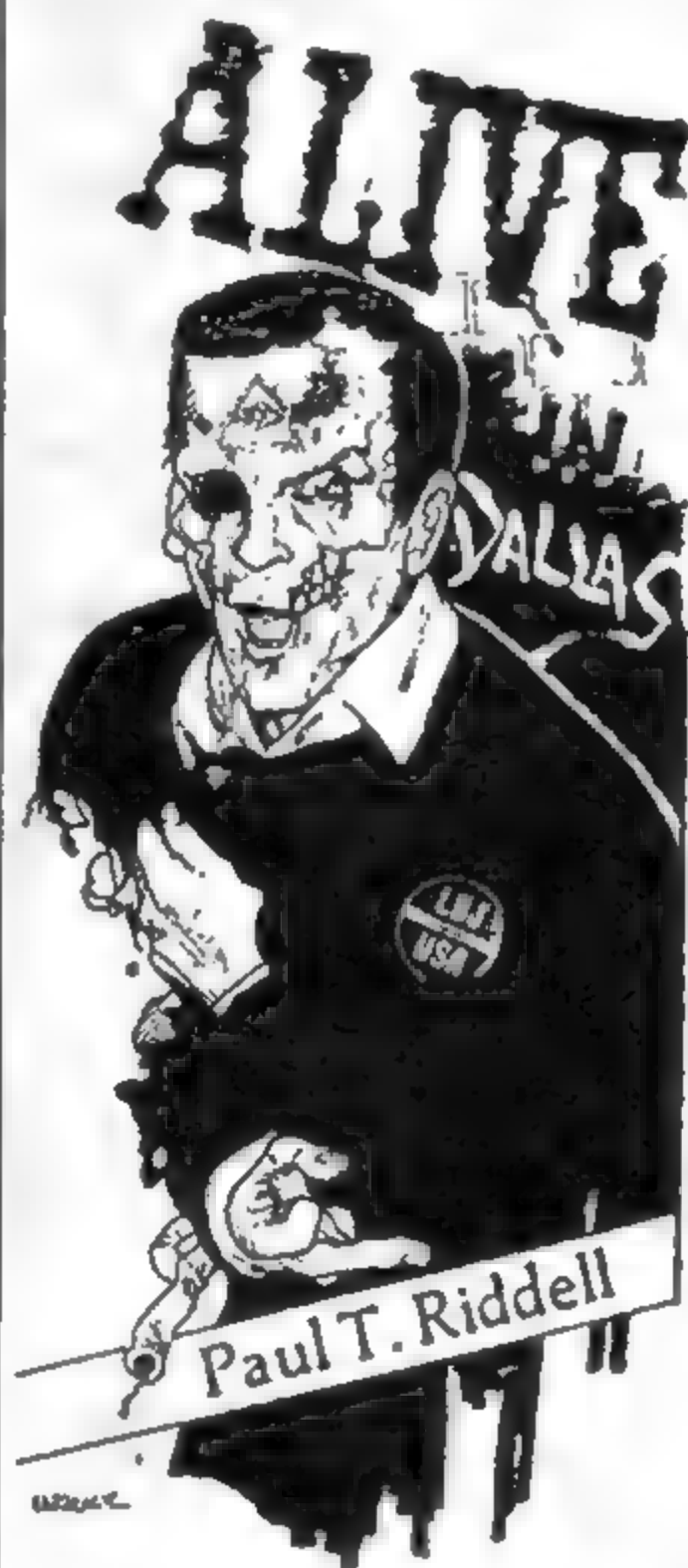
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JURASSIC FART: LIFE IMITATING ART

SOMETIMES HOLLYWOOD gets so surreal that calling business in that town "deranged" undercuts the real horror. But when it comes to Steven Spielberg, "deranged" doesn't cut it. True, he made lots of cash with *Jaws* and *ET*, but why didn't someone come to their senses when he started pitching *1941*, *Always* or *Hook*? In ten years, Ol' Steve's title has gone from *underkind* to Studio Liability. Sure, his flicks tend to stay in the black—but the magic has lost its luster, and how.

Not that he's alone. Sidney Sheinberg, one of Steve's bestest friends and president of MCA Universal, has the same affliction. Witness the eviscerated TV version of *Brazil* or (even more horrifying) his

apparent obsession with transforming his studio into one massive, bicoastal collection of amusement park rides. If not for these reasons we'd just pick on him for his hatred of Walt Disney and let him go on his merry way. However, even he can't bypass the laws of physics.

This cosmic violation is the underpinning of *Jurassic Park*, the filmic adaptation of Michael Crichton's novel due out next summer. The story concerns an amusement park (!) off the coast of Costa Rica populated with genetically replicated dinosaurs and their impending escape into the outside world. The film may offer a demonstration of life imitating art, sort of.

When Shienberg bought the rights to the book in 1990, he tacked a \$75 million price tag to the production, mostly earmarked for the novel special effects required.

According to popular knowledge, Sheinberg wanted to recreate the dinosaurs as life-sized animatronic models, in order to eventually place them in special *Jurassic Park* rides at both Universal City locations after Spielberg finished production. Sounds pretty thrifty, eh?

This stirred a bit of controversy amidst the special effects community. With the listed price tag, Sheinberg might have been better off cloning his own real dinosaurs and using them, especially in light of the record such massive robotics have had. Witness Italian effects guru Carlo Rambaldi's embarrassing efforts on 1976's *King Kong* and Disney's rubbery *Baby: Secret of the Lost Legend* debacle. Things took a turn for the even worse when Spielberg dropped Crichton's script adaptation and brought in Malia Scitch Marmo, the cowriter of *Hook*, to make the film "more accessible." One suspects that by the time the film finally reaches theatres, the dinosaurs will be horribly cute and cuddly, but I digress.

Investigating the feasibility of realistic, life-sized, animatronic saurians, I talked to experts who have some familiarity with similar projects: leg-

endary effects artist/ animator Ray Harryhausen and Dinamation, the people who treated us with those "Robot Dinosaurs" museum exhibits.

Harryhausen merely laughed at the folly and changed the subject, while the people at Dinamation told me that such a project was a "Quantum leap beyond anything we've even done, and we're state-of-the-art."

Indeed. It's hard to picture the umpteen billion problems inherent with trying to animate one dinosaur, but consider the fact that the FX crew will have to breathe life into dozens of the beasts of several different species. One *Aptosaurus* may be daunting, but a herd of ten? Seeing as most films need at least five different versions of one critter to pull off all the actions necessary, imagine all the components needed in order to bring one *Procompsognathus* to life. Once again, it may be cheaper to simply clone real dinosaurs and put them through the paces. But then, of course, that would be throwing effects genius Stan Winston & Co. out of a job and ending his chances to top his mind-blowing work on James Cameron's *Aliens*.

The money clock is ticking. And since Spielberg is not known for frugality when working in Universal time, this sucker might bear the expense record set by *Terminator 2* last year—perhaps resulting in Sheinberg's ouster at the increasingly impatient hands of Japanese parent company Matsushita. With any luck one final bomb with Sidney's lipstick on the casing might at least force Spielberg to pull his head out of his ass.

Wait a minute, the Japanese, miniaturization, giant monsters—maybe they know something I don't!

-Paul T. Riddell's first book, Squashed Armadillocon, should be out soon. This is a shameless plug. Comments or death threats may be sent to his new address: PO Box 235, Dallas, Texas 75221.

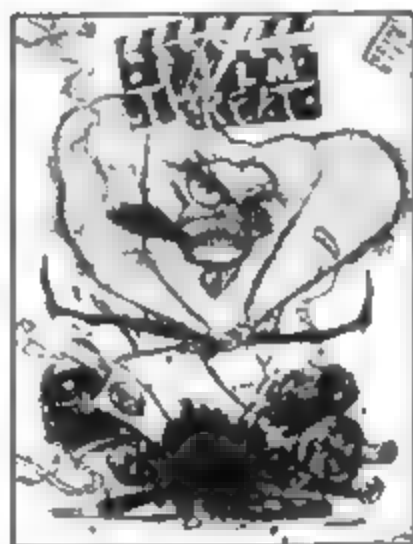


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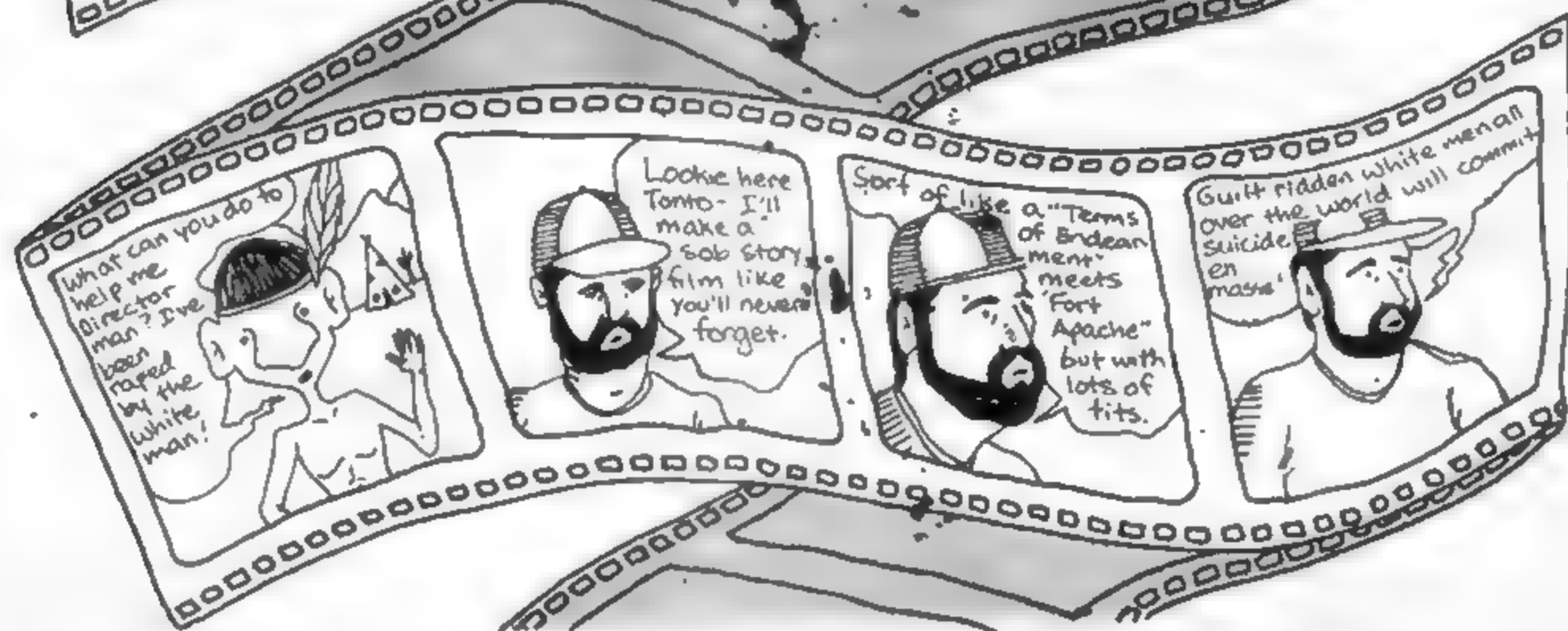
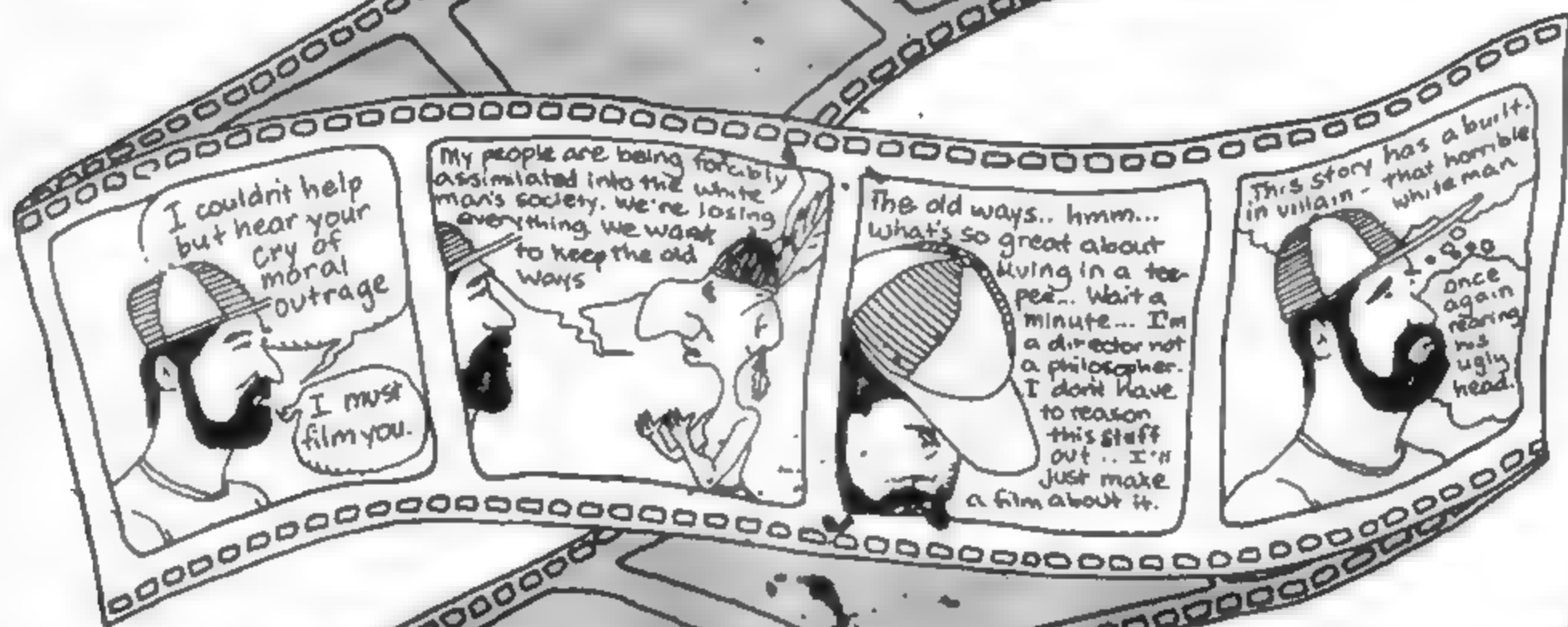
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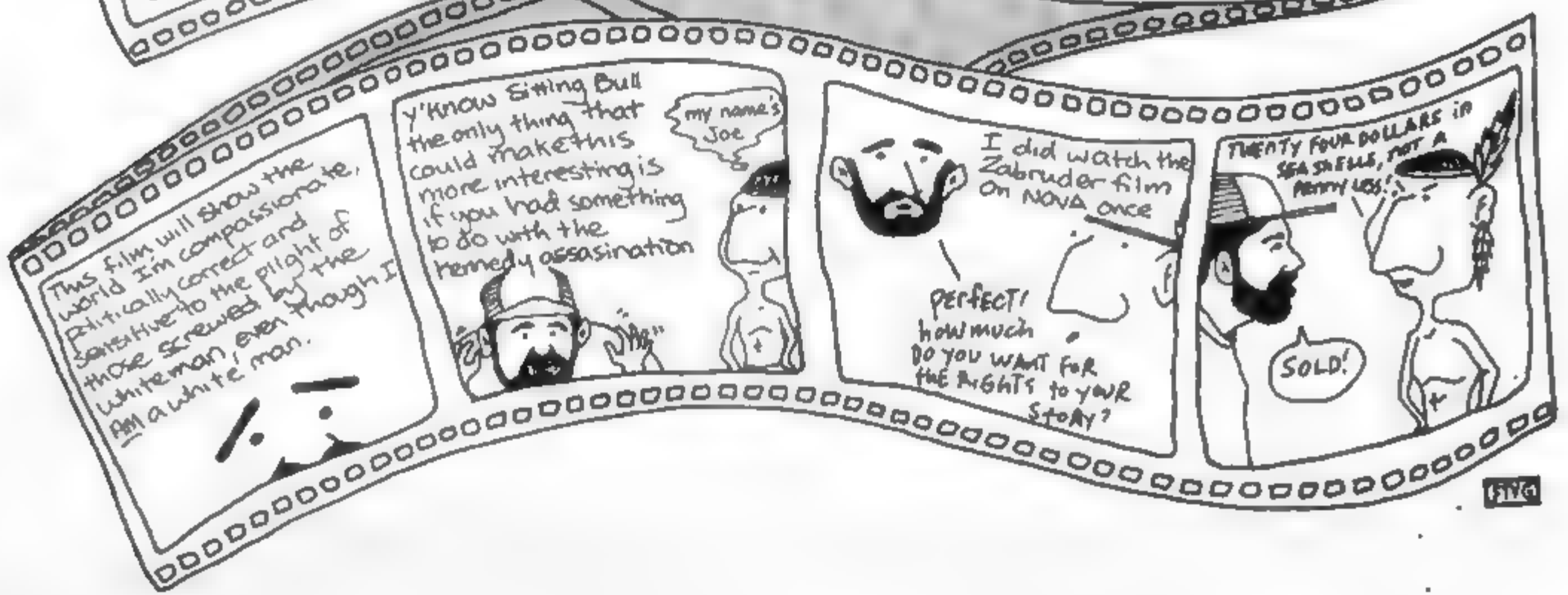
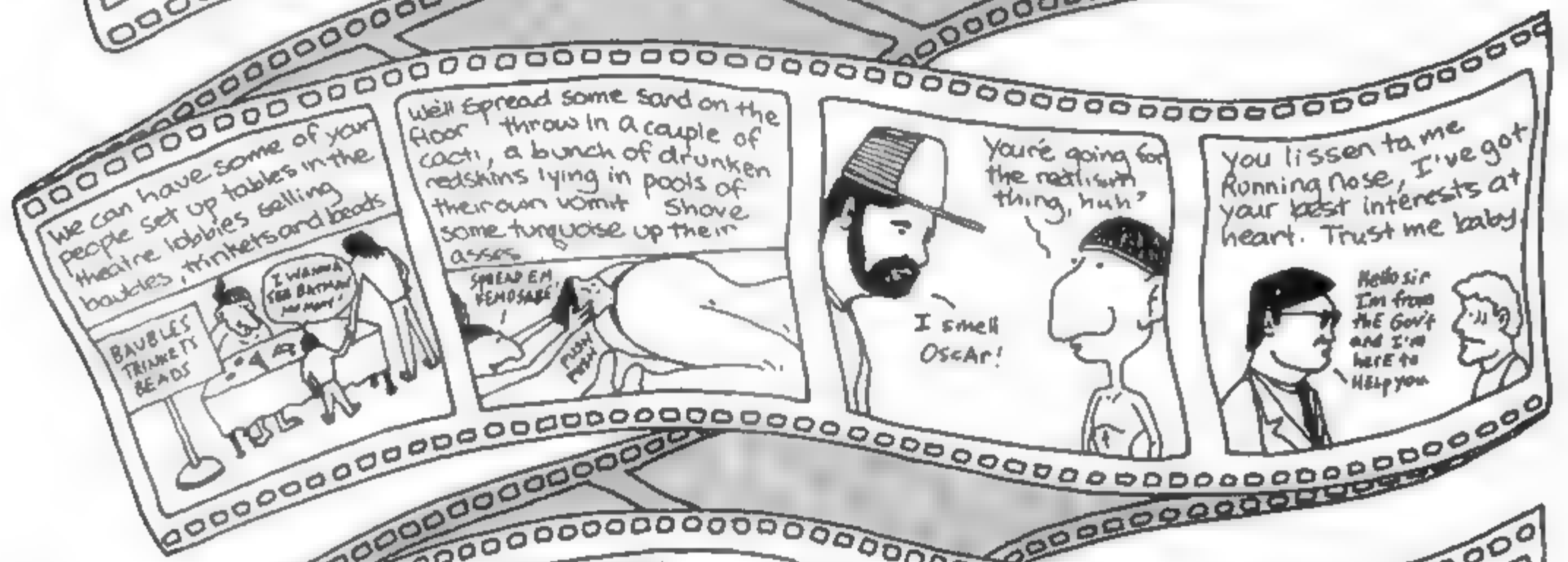
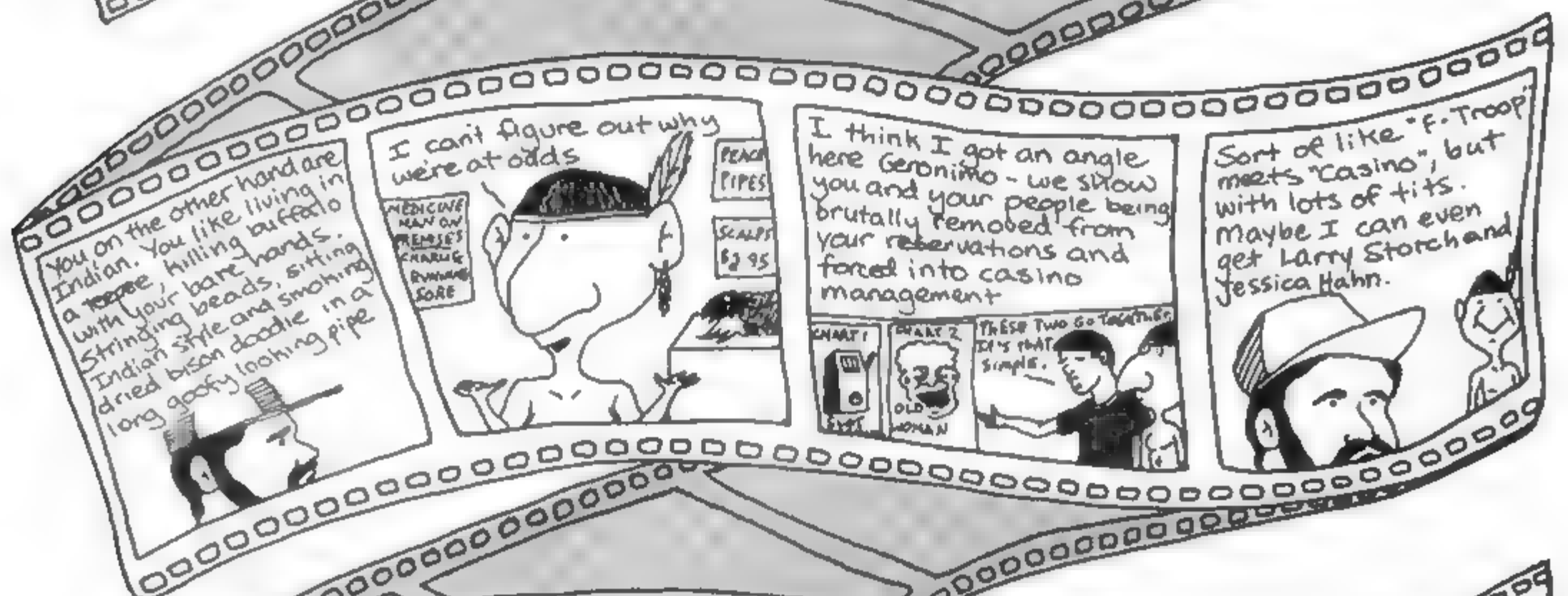
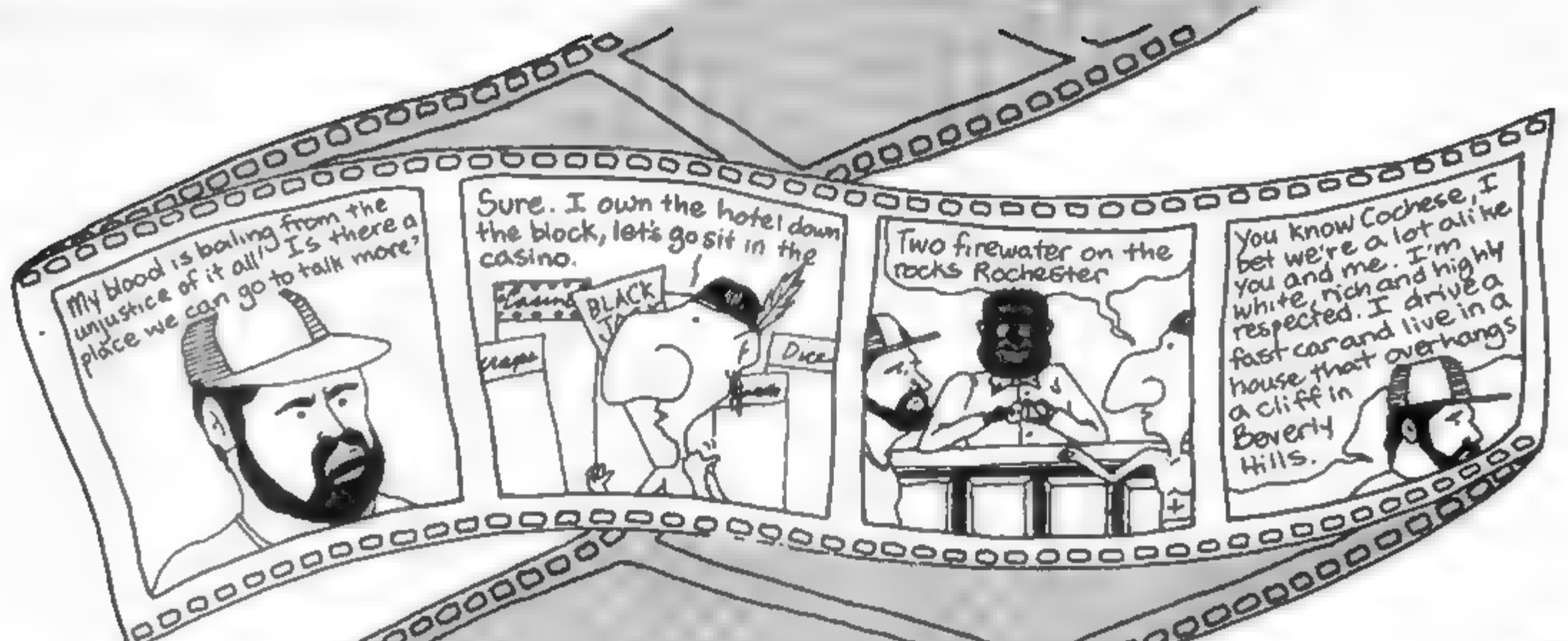
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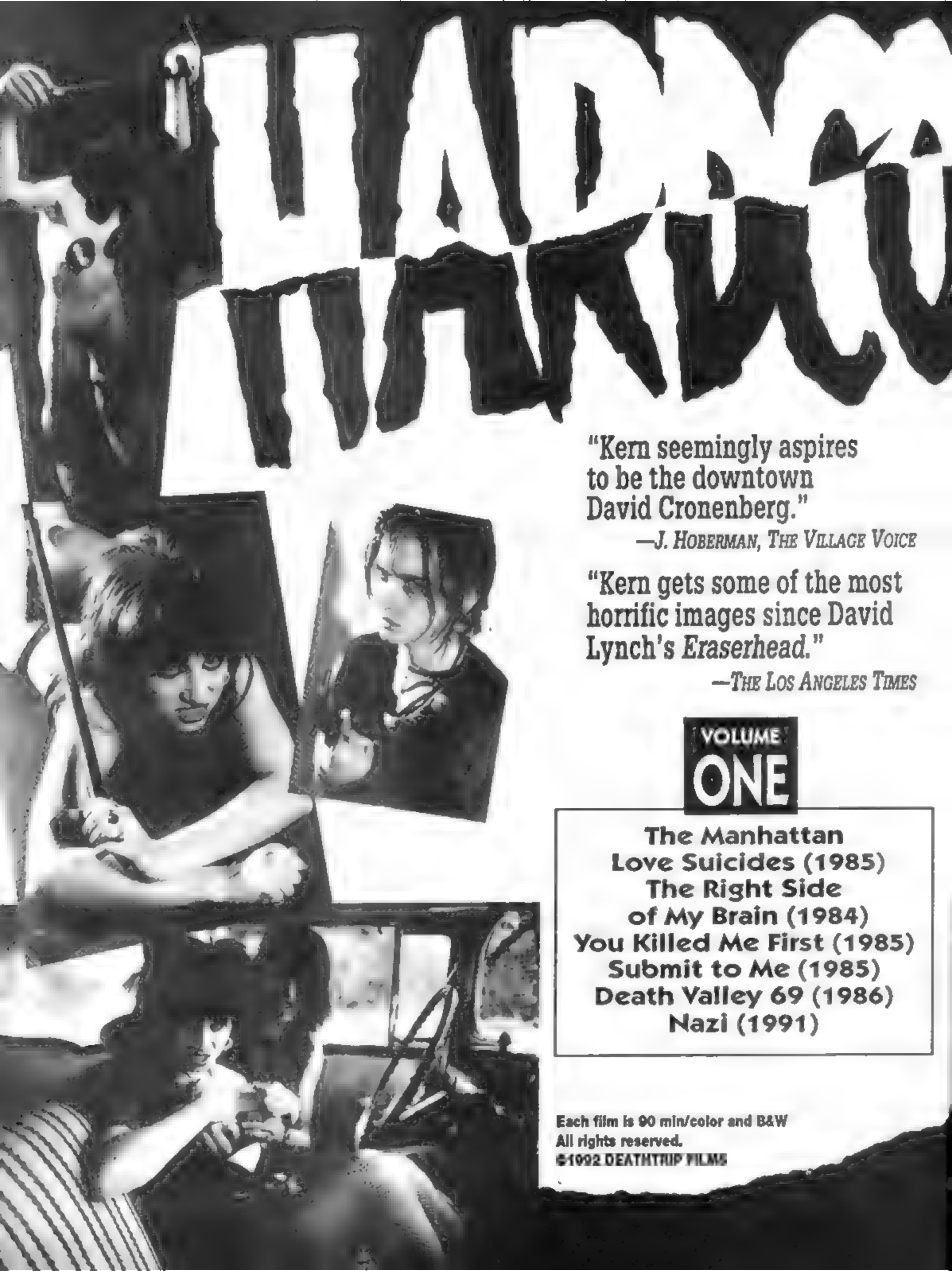
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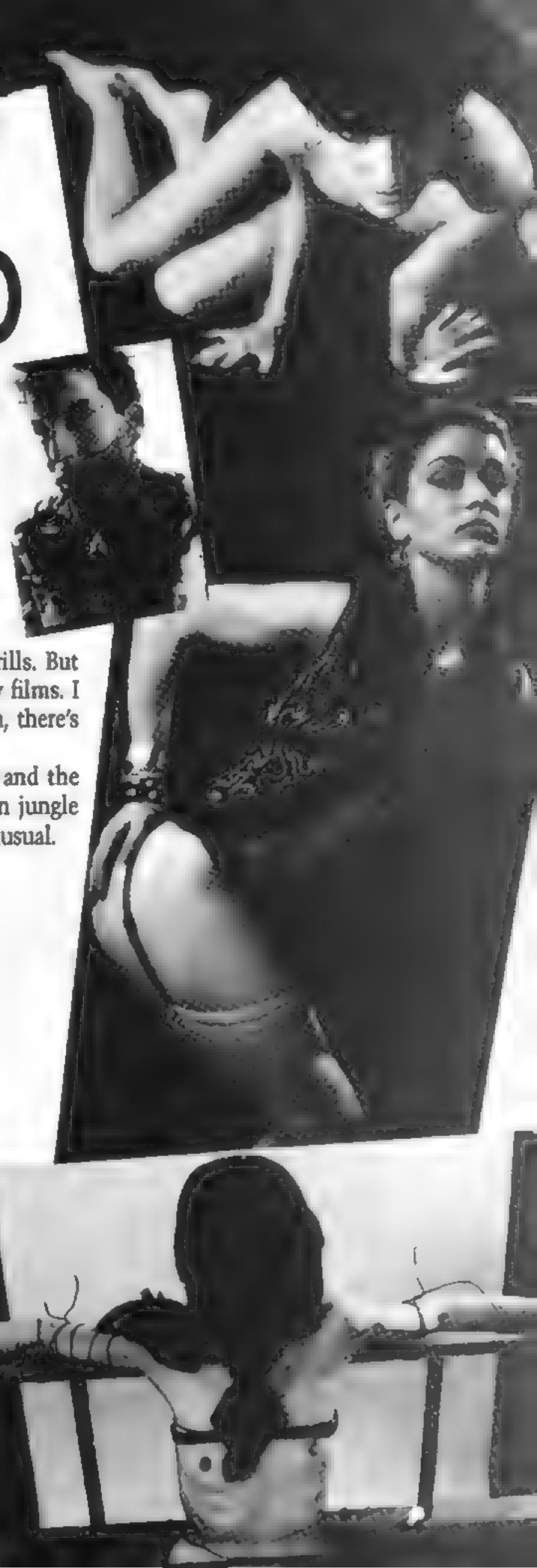
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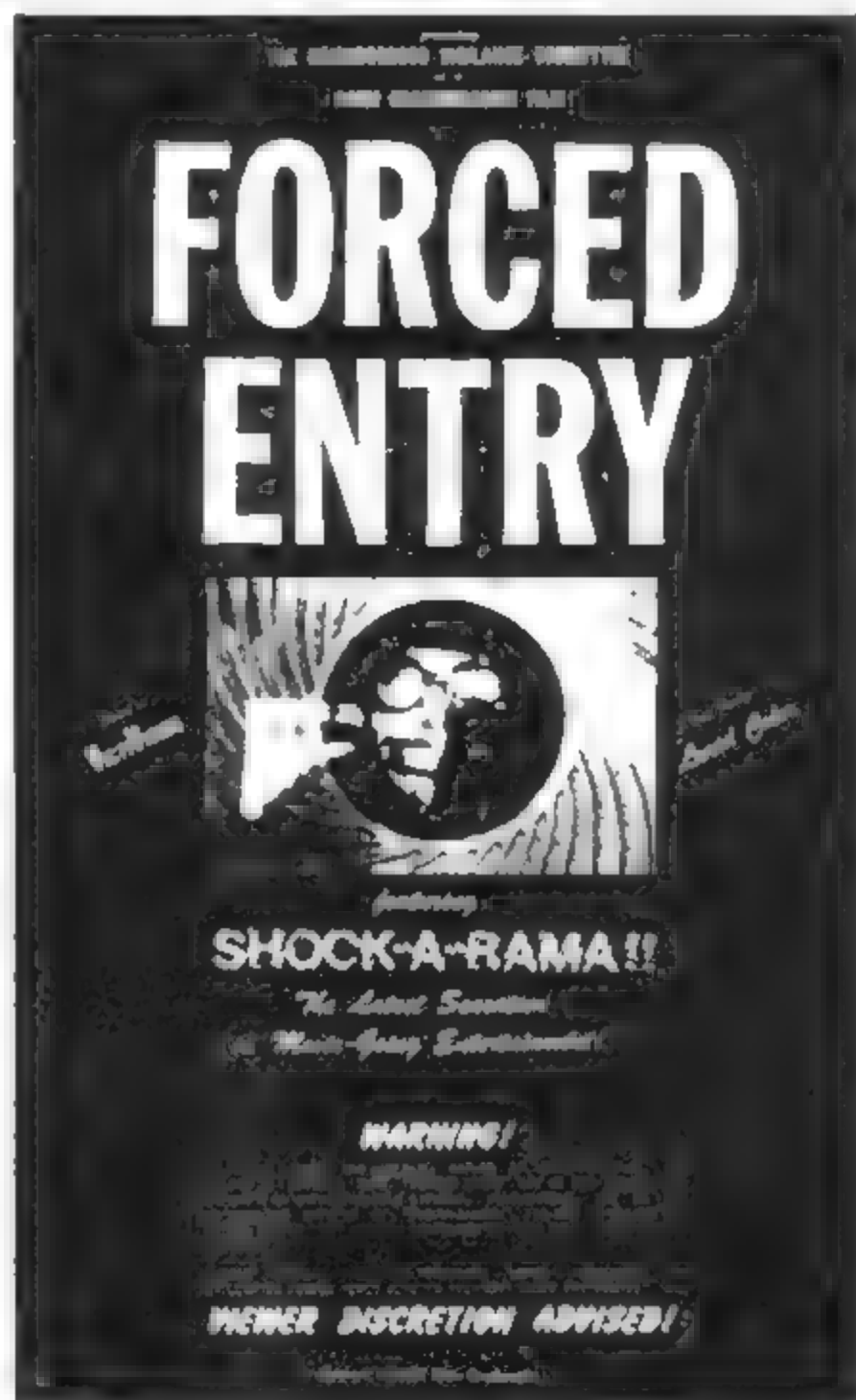
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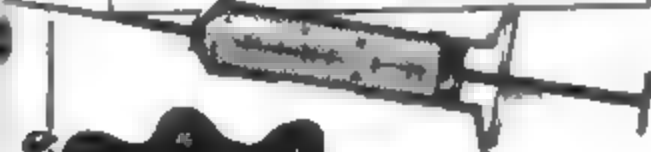
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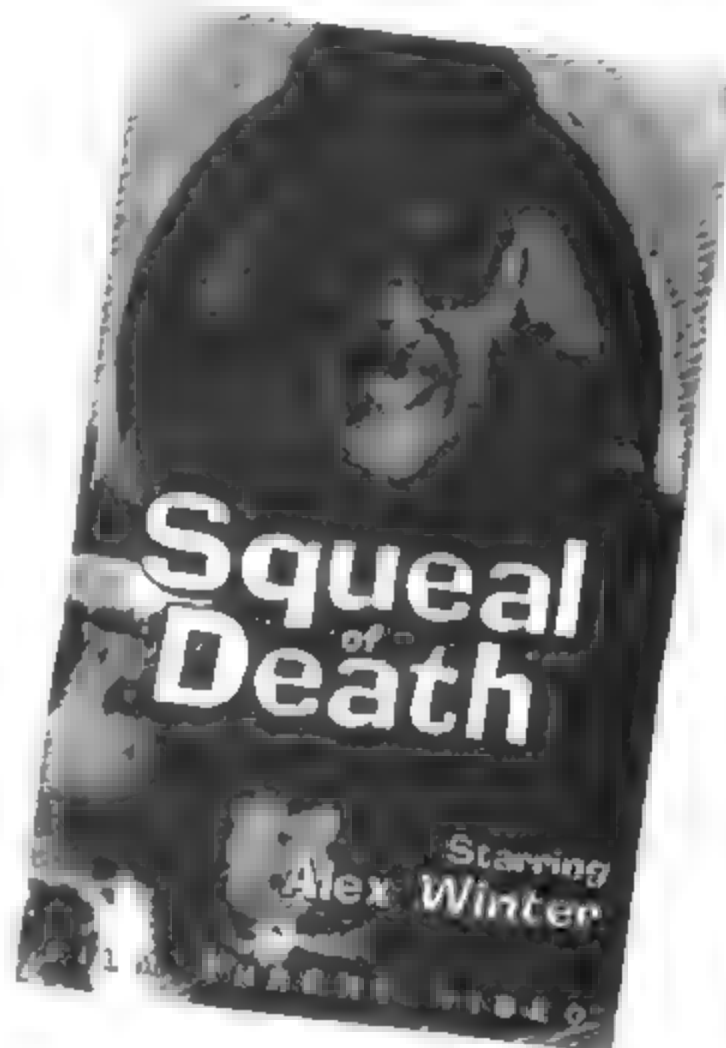
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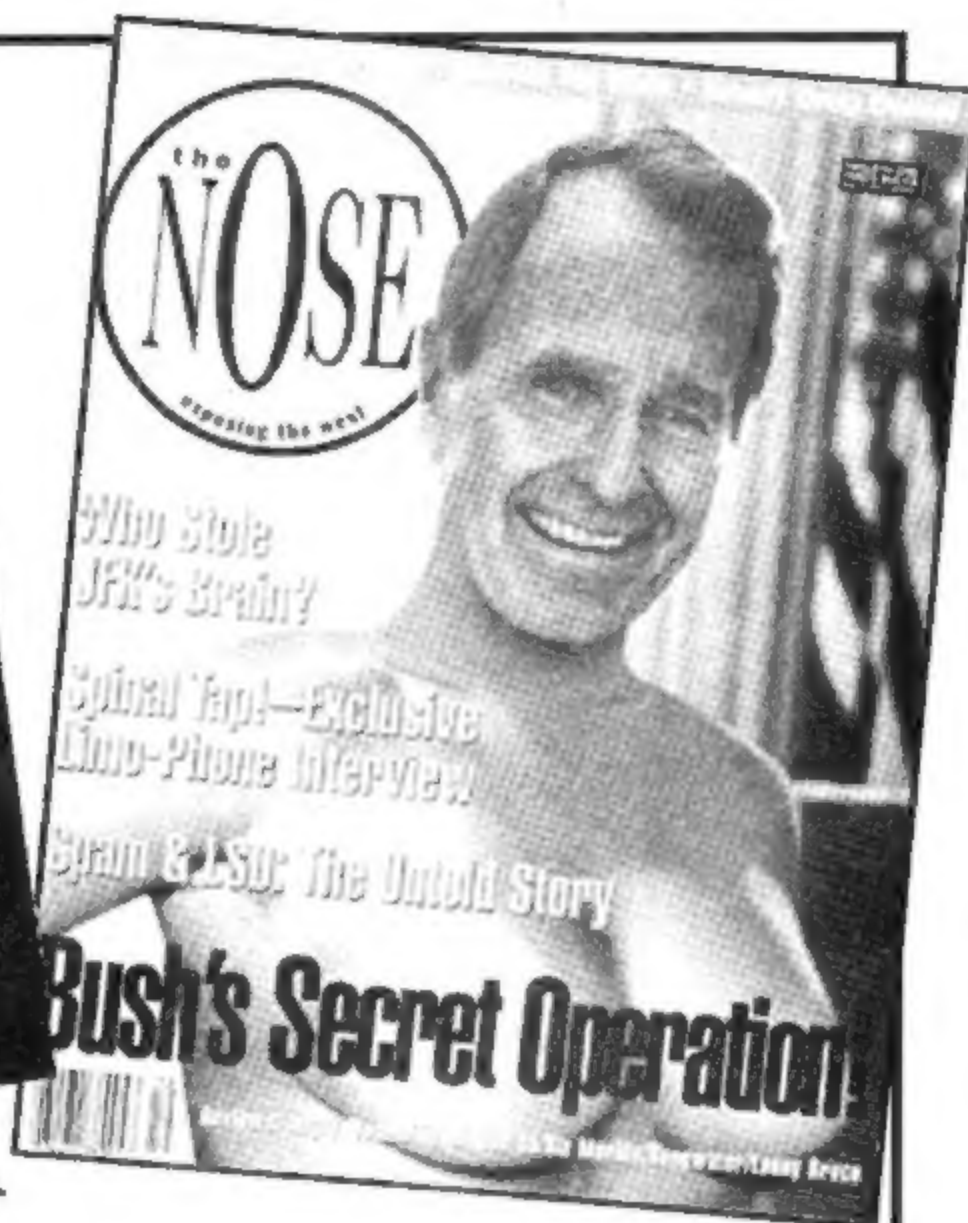
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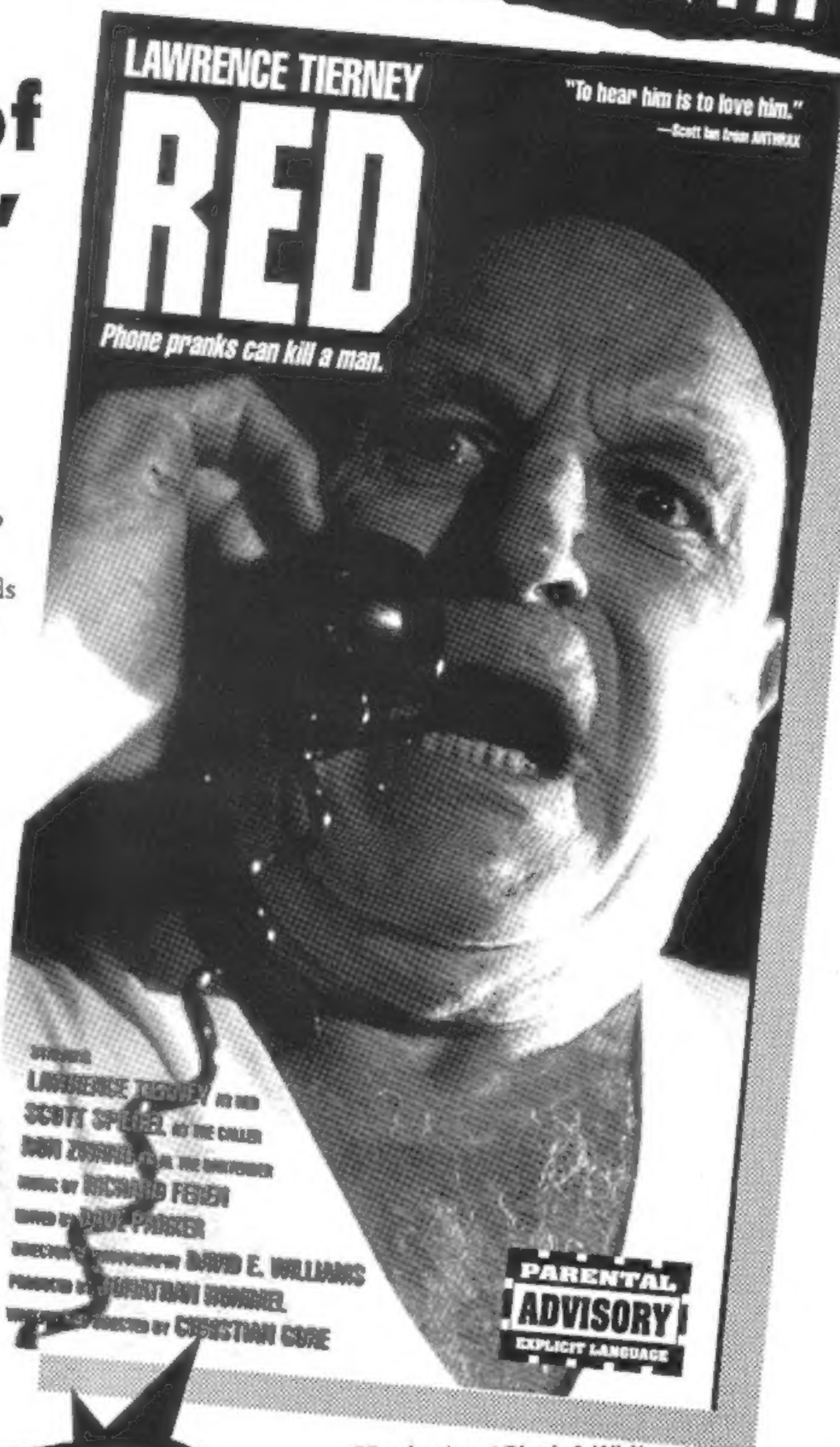
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